

CONVERSION  
AND  
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

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Conversion and religious  
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# CONVERSION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

BY  
REV. OSCAR S. KRIEBEL, A. M.,

Author of "Sanctification versus Christian Perfection."

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BEING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THREE SERMONS PREACHED BY THE  
PASTOR TO HIS PEOPLE AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS  
OF THE CONGREGATION WHO LISTENED  
TO THE SPOKEN DISCOURSES.

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PENNSBURG, PENNA.

1907

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## PREFACE.

This treatise on Conversion and Religious Experience is the outgrowth of a special sermon preached about two years ago to the members and friends of my congregation on the general subject of salvation and religious experience. The request was made at that time that the sermon be put in writing and published for general distribution. An effort was made to carry out the wishes of friends, but lack of time prevented the completion of the task while the interest in the subject was fresh. Delays and postponements have been frequent since then, and it is only recently that time and strength seemed available to carry the unfinished work through to completion.

During the last few months I have taken the opportunity of preaching three different sermons on the following phases of the subject under consideration: 1. Conversion as a Radical Change; 2. Conversion through Christian Culture; 3. The Varieties of Religious Experience. In these discourses I endeavored to show that for the confirmed sinner a radical transformation in conversion was necessary, as shown by the Bible and human experience, but that for the child of Christian parentage and Christian surroundings a process of gradual growth and development through Christian culture was the normal one and the one to be aimed at. I also endeavored to show why there is such a large variety of religious experience during the process of moral reconstruction and to point out the essential and the non-essential elements in Christian experience. The thoughts presented in the spoken discourses are somewhat elaborated in this treatise and reënforced and substantiated by frequent quotations from the works of the best modern writers on the subject. The form of the sermon has, therefore, largely given place to the method of treatment found most convenient in the tract or the printed book.

The Bible is the great text-book for information on these vital subjects, and hence I have sought to establish my position in many of these questions by frequent quotations from its pages. In addition to the Bible and general reference works on religious subjects, I have found "The Spiritual Life" and "The Religion of a Mature Mind," by Prof. Geo. A. Coe of Northwestern University, "The Psychology of Religion," by Prof. E. D. Starbuck, now of Leland Stanford University, and "The Varieties of Religious Experience," by Prof. William James, the well-known psychologist and philosopher of Harvard University, most helpful and suggestive, and I have taken the liberty of quoting freely from these authorities. Among other valuable books consulted are these: "Jesus Christ and the Christian Character," by Prof. Francis G. Peabody of Harvard University; "God's Education of Man," by President Hyde of Bowdoin College; "The Immanence of God," by Prof. Borden P. Bowne of Boston University; "The Philosophy of Christian Experience," by Henry W. Clarke; "Typical New Testament Conversions," by Dr. Noble of the Union Park Congregational Church, Chicago; "The Ascent of the Soul," by Dr. Amory H. Bradford of the "Outlook" editorial staff; "The Children's Covenant," by Rev. C. V. Anthony of San Francisco; "The Religious Affections," by Jonathan Edwards; and others, all of which have been helpful to a thorough understanding of the subject. Pres. King's "Christian Training and the Revival as Methods of Converting Men" is a most excellent discussion, in brief form, of certain phases of the question. To all these writers, and others not referred to above, I am under obligations for valuable helps and suggestions and hereby make public acknowledgment of my appreciation of their efforts for a more intelligent understanding of these important religious questions.

May our common Lord and Master bless the imperfect efforts here put forth to the salvation and edification of His children.

THE AUTHOR.

Pennsburg, Penna., February 7th, 1907.

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PART ONE.

CONVERSION AS A RADICAL  
CHANGE.

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Introductory.

It will be the purpose of this treatise to discuss conversion as a necessary and essential experience for the enjoyment of a true spiritual life. There is a natural life and there is a spiritual life. Conversion marks the point of transition from the natural life to the spiritual life. It is the process of transformation or of regeneration for the spiritual nature. Conversion will be considered in these pages as a radical change of heart and life for those who have lived in conscious sin and disobedience. And it will be considered as a gradual unfolding and development of the religious nature for the child of Christian parents and Christian training. For the confirmed sinner a radical change of heart and life in conversion is an absolute necessity. For the growing child of Christian parents and training a more quiet and gradual but no less radical change of spiritual life may be, and under normal conditions ought to be, experienced through proper Christian culture and education.

The first part of our discussion will deal with conversion as a radical change of heart and life for the sinner's entrance upon his spiritual career. The necessity for such a radical change, the terms used in Scripture to define conversion of this type and the results involved in its processes will be taken up in order. This will be followed by a discussion of conversion as a gradual process of unfolding and development of the spiritual nature of the child through Christian culture and education. The child is to be

regarded as belonging to God's spiritual household. And the term conversion will be used for this less radical kind of an experience through Christian growth because the same results are obtained and the same ends are reached and consequently the same spiritual activities must be assumed as being at work as in the more radical and more striking kind of conversion. The end is the same—the genuine spiritual life—the Kingdom of God on earth. And whether we enter the Kingdom through a sudden and radical experience or through a quiet, gradual process of growth and training matters little. The all-important thing is that the human soul should lead the life of the Spirit and should show forth the fruits of the Spirit in a life of unselfishness and true Christian holiness. The true spiritual life, the unselfish Christian character, this is “the one thing needful.” The general term conversion with its implied changes will serve to describe both types of experience referred to as essential for admission to the spiritual life.

## I. The Necessity of Conversion Considered.

That the average man needs a change of heart and a renewing of his mind and spirit, with a resultant change of his whole life and conduct, is the testimony of human life and human experience among Christian people everywhere. That man is prone to do evil and live a life of selfishness and of sordid pleasure, indulging his desires and passions and disregarding the needs and obligations of his higher nature, is a fact of world-wide knowledge and universal observation. Whatever our theories may be as to the origin of sin and evil in the world, we must surely recognize the terrible fact of its presence and the tremendous power of its influence, with its demoralizing and blasting effect upon human souls in all states and conditions of their growth and development.

We live in a world of sin and sorrow. We are surrounded by individuals and institutions which bear upon them the impress of unrighteousness and the lack of moral harmony. We are confronted in our own personal lives and experiences by forces and tendencies which draw us away from the good that we would do and ought to do and frequently lead us into a course of conduct

altogether unworthy of our divine origin and spiritual antecedents. We feel keenly indeed the presence in us and the existence around about us of tendencies and influences which conspire to lead us earthward rather than Heavenward, which seek to hold us in their relentless grasp and to frustrate the beneficent influences and saving forces in our lives and thus to make the grace and power of God of no avail. Surely no man who takes his own life seriously, or who observes carefully the lives and demeanor of his fellowmen, or who studies profoundly the history of human endeavor and human progress in the world, will deny the fact that sin is a matter of universal experience and of world-wide significance and that, consequently, the absolute necessity of deliverance from sin and redemption from its power and blighting effect must be recognized as equally universal and all-inclusive. As wide and as universal as is the fact of sin and evil in the world, so extensive and all-embracing must be the necessity for a radical change of the moral nature and for a profound reconstruction of the entire religious life, if man is to live his life here upon earth in constant communion with his Heavenly Father and in loving service to his fellowmen.

This view of life is abundantly illustrated in the teachings of Holy Scripture. Man is under the power and influence of sin. Although made in the image of God and fashioned by the hand of the Almighty and endowed with spiritual powers and capacities from on high, yet man is represented as having lost the divine image through sin and of having come under the power and condemnation of God's holy displeasure, because of his unbelief and disobedience. Our first parents forgot their Maker and yielded to the blandishments and allurements of the Tempter and thus lost their lofty estate. The children of Israel were continually tempting the Lord their God by forgetting the commandments and ordinances of the Almighty, and by falling into gross idolatry and corrupt and vicious personal practices. The Prophets were burdened, and sometimes overwhelmed, with this discouraging tendency in the children of Israel. A large proportion of their message was to the effect that people should forsake their idols, should abandon their life of forbidden association with the heathen

world, should turn away from their evil ways, and should remember the Lord their God and worship Him, and Him only, in spirit and in truth. John the Baptist began his mission of preparation for the Kingdom of Christ by saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And Jesus himself began his ministry by preaching "Repentance" from sin and obedience to the Will of God.

The insufficiency of the old life of legalism and of self-righteousness is abundantly emphasized in the New Testament Scriptures, especially by the teaching and example of our Master himself. Nothing less than a complete and unconditional surrender of the whole life of man to the saving and life-giving influences of the Gospel will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the spiritual standards set by our Saviour. The law will not suffice. The punctilious performance of external religious observances cannot and will not atone for a lack of God's purifying and energizing spirit in the heart of man. There must be a new heart, a new life, a reconstruction of the entire voluntary and emotional state of the individual through the renewing influences of the spirit. This is beautifully taught in that notable conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, in which Jesus used these striking words: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (that is from above) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou canst hear the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Other passages of New Testament Scripture, both in the language of Jesus and that of the Apostle Paul, are equally emphatic on this point. Jesus said, in reply to the questioners concerning the Galilæans whose blood Pilot had mingled with their sacrifices, that if they would not repent, they would all likewise perish. Luke 13: 3. So the Saviour also instructed his disciples, in reply to the question "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," by placing a little child in the midst of them and thus honoring the simple and guileless trust of children, with these immortal words: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall



not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3. Paul and the other apostles, as recorded in the Acts and Epistles, were preaching "repentance and the forgiveness of sin" as requisites for entrance into the spiritual brotherhood of the new life; "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Galatians 6:15.

It is not strange, therefore, that the doctrine of a new life, the necessity of a radical change of heart and purpose in the unregenerate man, was made one of the fundamental doctrines of all systems of Christian theology. It is a recognized doctrine of the Catholic church, though variously interpreted and applied. It is a central doctrine of all Protestant theologians, though not equally emphasized in practice by all of them. Some branches of the Protestant church lay greater stress upon the subjective aspect of the changed life. Others again emphasize more strongly the objective side, as manifested in Christian life and conduct. Some denominations insist more urgently upon a certain, distinct kind of emotional experience as an accompaniment and evidence of conversion, while others again emphasize the practical effect of the new life in demanding the requisite "fruits meet for repentance." But there is absolutely no difference of opinion among the various branches of the Christian church as to the fundamental necessity of a radical change of heart for every human soul in conscious sin before it can enter fully into communion with the Father and enjoy the blessed consciousness of His abiding presence.

And it is eminently right and proper that this should be so. It is so easy for man to build upon other foundations than that which are laid, namely, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is so easy for men to satisfy themselves with an outwardly correct life and to pay too little attention to the attitude of the heart, from which we are told really are "the issues of life." It is so natural for men to delude themselves with the thought that a strict observance of the external requirements of the religious life is all that is necessary and, consequently, to ignore the fundamental disposition of the human will, which really determines the rightness or wrongness of all our acts. Man is so prone to consider the rigid observance of forms and ceremonies, the punctilious performance

of vows and sacrifices, the careful observance of times and seasons, and the strict conformity to the outward standards of a moral life, as the all-important things of life and to forget the more exacting spiritual requirements as expressed by the Psalmist "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Men are so likely to forget that religion is not a thing of the outward act, but of the heart, not of confession and deeds alone, nor even chiefly, but of character; that too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the necessity of the benevolent will, which determines the quality of all our acts and makes us either blame-worthy or acceptable in the sight of God. Neither Christian ancestry, nor church membership; neither private devotions nor faithful attendance upon public worship; neither singing of Christian hymns, nor engaging in the solemn process of sacred prayer; neither private benevolence, nor public charity, will avail anything unless these spring from a heart of Christian love, sanctified by the regenerating influences of the spirit of God and wholly and unreservedly given over to the service of God. As St. Paul tells us in Corinthians 13: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And the charity here spoken of is true Christian benevolence.

Rev. George C. Lorimer, D. D., in his little treatise on conversion puts the same thought succinctly and strikingly in this way: "It is not your baptism, however scriptural, nor your forms, however churchly, nor your creed, however orthodox, that grants the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. God has said that He will write His law upon the heart and enshrine His spirit there; that He will take away the heart of stone and give thee a heart of flesh. The old man, with his deeds, is to be put off, and the new man, created in knowledge and holiness, is to take his place."

## II. The Scriptural Terms Used for Conversion.

What is the nature of conversion? What is implied in a change of heart? What is involved in the fundamental processes of repentance and regeneration so indispensable to the Christian life and to genuine Christian character? Under what figures of speech is it referred to in the Scriptures? What terms are employed in designating the processes and states involved in the changed condition of the moral life? How does the word of God conceive the changes and experiences necessary to obtain entrance into the spiritual life through the gates of conversion?

### 1. Cease to do Evil, Learn to do Well.

One of the simplest conceptions under which the changed life is described is that of the twofold act of turning away from the evil and of following after that which is good and true and noble. Sinners are urged to leave their life of sin and selfishness and to take up a life of goodness and mercy, to forsake their wicked ways and to return to the Lord their God from whom they had departed; to depart from evil and follow after that which is good; to abandon their evil associations and their unrighteous manner of life, and to cleave unto the Lord their God with all their strength and to keep His Commandments and observe His laws. Thus, Isaiah 1:16 and 17: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do well." And, again, we have these notable words in Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Christ himself in that most touching scene with the woman who was a sinner and who was caught red-handed in the act of her sin and disgrace, after bending over and writing with His finger in the sand, thus giving her accusers an opportunity to withdraw, looked at the woman and asked her: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" "She said, no man, Lord." "*Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; go,*

*and sin no more.*" John 8:9, 11. The only request that our Lord made of the woman was that she should turn away from her evil course and from her wicked associations and abandon her old life and sin no more. That, of course, would imply that she should follow, on the positive side, a life of virtue and purity as distinguished from a life of sin and degradation.

This conception of conversion seemingly regards the change chiefly on the external side and might lead some to think that the changes required were really too superficial to go to the root of the matter. It is evident that the mere ceasing to do evil outwardly would not be sufficient—nor the learning to do well from the standpoint of conduct adequate to satisfy the more fundamental conditions of a changed life. But these terms taken in their deeper significance surely do imply an absolute change of heart and purpose as the source of the changes enjoined. It is quite possible that men may cease to do evil in word and deed and yet be unchanged at heart. But it is manifestly impossible to "learn to do well" in the true, spiritual sense of the term without the antecedent fact of a changed attitude of heart and of a right purpose of life from which all good deeds must flow to have any moral value. If the wicked truly forsakes his way and the unrighteous man truly forsakes his wicked thoughts and desires and if he turns to the Lord his God, in sincerity and in truth, with a view to pardon and forgiveness and with an earnest purpose to do the will of God, then we may feel assured that such a soul will truly find pardon and peace and will enter upon a life of faith and trust, of love and service.

## **2. Put off the "Old Man." Put on the "New Man."**

Another term that is used in the New Testament to express the radical change of heart involved in conversion is the "New Man." The process thus designated is somewhat similar to the one just described, in which the unconverted man is enjoined to abandon his life of sinfulness and follow after a life of righteousness and well-doing. When we are told by the apostle Paul to "put off the old man" with all his entanglements and worldly

alliances, and to "put on the new man" with all his lovely attributes of unselfishness and righteousness and true holiness, we are dealing with a double process, namely, the putting away of one kind or mode of life and the substituting in its place of another and altogether different and better kind of life. The process involves the renouncing of the life of the flesh and of appropriating the life of the spirit, which is the new man.

The term "Old Man" for the unregenerate life and "New Man" for the renewed life is defined by the Apostle Paul thus: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:22-24. And again in Colossians Paul writes: "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Colossians 3:9-11. In Ezekiel we have somewhat similar terms used for the same thing: "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Ezekiel 11:19, 20. And again, Ezekiel 18:31: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Once again, the idea of a new man, as expressed in the terms "new heart" and "new spirit," is beautifully described in the justly celebrated thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel 36: 25-28.

The expression "Old Man" in these passages is used for the old life of sin and, consequently, for the deeds of the old life, to which the apostle refers in the fourth chapter of Ephesians and also in the third chapter of Colossians. The deeds of the old life are described in such terms as these: "Having the understanding darkened," "being alienated from the life of God through ignorance" and "blindness of their heart," being "given over unto lasciviousness," having "corrupt communications proceeding out of the mouth," being full of bitterness, "wrath," "malice," "blasphemy" and "filthy communications out of your mouth." All these terms are included in the works or manifestations of the old man and they are to be put away. And contrasted with these, we have the terms that are used in connection with the life and deeds of the "New Man." They are such as these: "Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;" and, again, such terms, "forbearing one another" and "forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any," "let the peace of God rule in your hearts," "let the words of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom," "be renewed in the spirit of your mind," "put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness," "and above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." These and many similar terms are used to express the spirit and purpose of the "New Man" in all his varied experiences and manifestations.

It is very evident, from these references to the works of the old and the new man respectively, that more is involved in the process of "putting off the old man and putting on the new man" than a mere external change, as might be implied by a superficial consideration of the language used. The old life is not something that can be gotten rid of as easily and as conveniently as a suit of clothes is discarded, nor is the new life something that can be put on as mechanically and as superficially as a new garment can be donned. As in the case of the expression, "cease to do evil, learn to do well," more is required than to abstain outwardly from

all forbidden acts of sin and to practice deeds of uprightness and honesty, so more is implied in putting off the old man than in merely abstaining from evil deeds and practices. And more is required in putting on the new man than to appropriate, ready-made, as it were, a whole series of activities conventionally considered correct and outwardly conforming to the requirements of a morally upright life. To be sure, the putting off of the old man requires the renunciation of the deeds of the old man, and putting on the new man necessitates the showing forth the fruits of the new man as the inevitable outgrowth of the spiritual change. But the old man is more than deeds, so the new man is more than a morally correct outward life. Both the old man and new man respectively grow out of a disposition of the heart. The deeds of the old man or of the new man respectively are only the outward expressions of this spiritual attitude. A benevolent attitude of the heart makes the actions which spring therefrom benevolent acts, that is, acts of love and of mercy, of goodness and truth. And all this deeper and more fundamental conception of what is involved in the putting off the old man and putting on the new man is not only implied in the words of the apostle, but is clearly expressed in many of the terms used. This is particularly true of the positive side of the change required. It would manifestly be impossible for the new man to show deeds of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and love unless they originated in a benevolent disposition of the heart, in a right attitude of the will; in other words, in a new heart and a new spirit. No man can be truly humble unless he has the spirit of Christ. Neither can any man be truly merciful or forgiving or charitable or unselfish unless he has the selfsame spirit. And all this deeper conception involved in the change under discussion is clearly expressed by the apostle in such terms as these: "Put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." And, again, "Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell

in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Colossians 3 : 15-17.

It is in the same line of thought and by a similar figure of speech that Paul tells the Romans to "put on the armour of light," and again, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." In the celebrated chapter on Immortality, Paul tells the Corinthians, "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." To put off the old man, therefore, means not only to put away the deeds of the old man, but also all the desires and impulses, the motives and disposition of the heart from which these flow. And to put on the new man means not only to show forth the deeds of the new man, as described by the Apostle Paul, but it means to really put on the spirit of the Christ himself, from whom our acts must derive their state of rightness, and to adopt His life and His teaching as the rule of our lives, and to enthrone in our moral kingdom the spirit and mind of the Master himself as the all-controlling and all-determining attitude of our hearts.

### **3. Crucified with Christ. Risen with Him.**

Another term which is frequently used for the act of regeneration and which is very suggestive is, "to be crucified with Christ" unto the world, and to "rise with Him" in the spirit. The figure of the cross is here used as the symbolic process to which the struggling soul is subjected. The cross is the symbol of suffering, the ensign of tragedy, the expression of abject humiliation, as well as of surpassing glory and victory in the supreme crisis of the life of Jesus. It was preceded by a bitter agony in struggle, by drops of blood, by heaviness of soul and by crushing burdens silently borne. It was followed by the empty grave, by the spiritualized body, by the glorified spirit emancipated from the limitations of its incarnate life, by the triumphant ascension into heaven. In like manner, the crucifixion has become the symbolic expression of the



renewing and regenerative experiences of the human soul in conversion. Notice the expression used by the apostle in Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." And, again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul uses these oft-quoted words: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. The same expressions are also used in Galatians 5:24, when Paul says: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." And once again, in Galatians 6:14, 15, the apostle says: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

And so the cross stands for the supreme moral crisis of regeneration in a most suggestive manner. The old man, with his lusts and desires, is to be crucified, to suffer anguish, sorrow and pain in the act of death. The new man is to come forth out of the grave of its crucified body, from the limitations and entangled alliances of the life of the flesh, with larger powers, greater spiritual capacity, and infinitely greater power for Christian service. The crucifixion is the crisis which separates the old life from the new life. It is the transforming and transfiguring process. To be crucified with Christ, therefore, means, figuratively speaking, to be crushed with sorrow and defeat, to suffer pain and anguish, to be nailed as to the old life on the cross, and to die. To be risen with Christ means to come forth out of the grave, transfigured and regenerated, into the fuller and purer and ampler life of the spirit. For the world to be "crucified unto me" and "I unto the world," as Paul puts it, means that the spirit of the world, which is best typified by the flesh, shall pass through the selfsame process of suffering, anguish and death into the grave, so that the transformed and renewed life of the new man may come forth and live. For the world to be crucified unto me means that the spirit and

life of the world shall be dead unto me, shall have no disturbing influence over me, shall have no existence for me. That I shall be crucified unto the world means that I shall be dead unto the spirit and life of the world, that the world shall not exist for me, so far as its baneful influence upon me is concerned. I am dead to the world that I may live unto God and His spirit. The world is dead unto me that the spirit of God may live in me. The spirit of the world and the spirit of God cannot live together in me side by side. The one must be dead to the other. Or, as Paul expresses it: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The flesh and the spirit are here contrasted. The flesh refers to the "Old Man" and typifies the old life of sin. The spirit refers to the "New Man" and typifies the new life of the spirit, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Romans 8:5. The flesh and the spirit are at enmity, the one signifying death, the other life, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8:13. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Romans 8:6, 7. And the fruits of the flesh and of the spirit are evident and testify to the perpetual and irreconcilable conflict between the two. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." Galatians 5:17. The works or the fruits of the flesh are described by Paul as follows: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Then, again, the fruits of the spirit are also described by Paul, as follows: "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

temperance; against such there is no law." Galatians 5:19-23. In Galatians 6:7, 8, Paul writes these impressive words as to the radical difference between the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the spirit: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

It appears, therefore, that this conception of regeneration assumes some sort of relationship between the life of the flesh and the life of the spirit. The two are not entirely and absolutely distinct, in that they have no relation to each other or no reference to a common origin. As in the case of Jesus, the divine life of the risen Christ was not different in quality from the divine life of the incarnate Christ, crowded and cramped and imprisoned into the limitations of the human body before the crucifixion. The crucifixion was not only a dying process, according to the physical state of his incarnate life, but it was also and chiefly a process by which the earth-bound and humanity-limited life of the cross became once more the unconditioned and unhampered life of the spirit. In like manner, the spiritual life of the new birth has its roots and germs in the life of the flesh. What is earthly, perishable, sinful, carnal, is crucified and must die; but out of the grave of the old crucified life of the flesh comes forth the germ of the new life, as the germ of the new plant comes forth out of the death and corruption of the old grain of wheat. Without death, as it were, there can be no life. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

The same intimate connection of the new life with the old life is suggested in Isaiah, when he writes: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18. This sounds somewhat strange. Is it possible that sin can be turned to righteousness, that the scarlet of the sinful life can be converted into the white purity of the life of righteousness? How can these things be? Can sin be anything but sin? Can there be any connection

between life and death, between light and darkness, between righteousness and sin? In ordinary language and in much of the biblical phraseology the thought is conveyed that sin and righteousness have no connection at all with each other and no relation to each other except that of enmity; and this of course is true in the sense that all sin must die. The old life of the flesh must perish, and the old man must be crucified. And yet, considered more profoundly and more fundamentally, do not sin and righteousness flow from the same original source? Do they not both have their root and origin in the common impulses and passions, desires and affections of our human natures? Is it not, after all, a matter of will and a disposition of the heart whether our native instincts and impulses, which are really the motive forces of our lives, shall lead us to life or to death, shall bring forth acts of sin and selfishness or deeds of love and purity? For instance, the sin of covetousness has its root in the natural, useful impulse of the soul to acquire, to possess; and this impulse is surely of the utmost importance in the struggle for existence; but it needs to be regulated and controlled, and if turned to useful and beneficent directions serves a most valuable purpose. We are to seek and to seek earnestly, but only the best things. We are to desire things and to acquire them, not for selfish enjoyment, but for wise and benevolent purposes. The same is true of the sin of gluttony. The natural desire for food is a normal and necessary one and, discreetly and temperately indulged, serves a very useful purpose. A natural, instinctive craving for physical sustenance may, therefore, lead us to an act of sin in gluttony or to an act of usefulness and virtue in the moderate enjoyment of nourishment, depending altogether upon the controlling and directing purpose back of it. And is not this practically true of all our sins? Is it not possible to convert the crude and fundamental impulses, desires and passions of our natures, out of which so many of our sins of self-indulgence and self-gratification spring, because of a lack of temperate control, to the higher and more unselfish uses of life? Is it not true, therefore, that the fundamental impelling and propelling forces of our natures, our instincts and impulses, our passions and desires,

which are not only innocent in themselves, but absolutely essential to life and self-preservation, may be harnessed and wisely directed by the steady hand of a benevolent will and made to serve the highest and most beneficent uses of life?

It is well to distinguish, therefore, between sin and virtue, between selfishness and unselfishness, as not two entirely different manifestations as to their source, but as having really a common origin in the affective side of our nature. To control, therefore, our manifold desires, to subject our impulses and passions to the sway of reason, to be guided in our affections and longings by the law of love and mercy, to turn these elemental forces of our natures to the highest and noblest uses of personal, social and religious service; this is the great problem of life, this is the supreme requirement of the divided, struggling self for a life of true benevolence and Christian charity.

#### 4. The "New Birth." Born from Above.

One of the most suggestive expressions found in the New Testament for the change involved in true conversion from a state of conscious sin is the "New Birth." There is a natural birth, so there is a spiritual birth. The natural man has the beginning of his physical life in the natural birth. The spiritual man has his origin and beginning in the spiritual birth. The natural phenomenon of physical birth is the fact seized upon to suggest some of the most fundamental and most radical and most mysterious experiences in the life of the human soul.

The newness of this new life is one of the things emphasized. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus saith: "How can a man be born when he is old?" showing he mistook the force of our Saviour's remarks entirely. Jesus said in reply: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." John 3:5-7.

The same term is used by Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." I Peter 1:23. And, again: "Who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I Peter 1:3. Just as in the physical birth a new life is brought into the world, so in the spiritual birth there are new moral and spiritual powers brought into life and activity. It is in line with the expression, "Dead in trespasses and sins," "dead to sin," "dead to the law," so frequently used in the Epistles. The soul that is dead in trespasses and sins needs a new life, a spiritual birth. As Paul says: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1. And again: "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened (or made alive)." Colossians 2:13. The newness of the spiritual life, though not under the same figure, is emphasized by Paul in II Corinthians: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17. Also in Galatians 6:15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." The spiritual life is a new life and calls for new powers and activities, new associations and new interests. The newness of the spiritual life is everywhere emphasized and made important.

The new life is also spoken of as "coming from above." It is a creation of the spirit of God in its operations upon the human soul. As physical life is necessary to beget physical life, so spiritual life is necessary to beget spiritual life. God is the source of all spiritual life. Through faith in Him and through the vitalizing operations of His spirit upon our spirits, either creating new powers or awakening to life the innate spiritual capacities of the soul, we are born of God and enter into the life of the New Birth. "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," as we find it in John 1:13. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God." I John 4:7.

This new spiritual life is begotten not only by contact of the

divine life with the human life through direct and immediate touch, it may also be brought forth by the contact of the spiritual life of one soul with the spiritual life of another soul. Like begets like. Spirit begets spirit. Paul says in Philemon concerning Onesimus: "Whom I have begotten in my bonds." Also in writing to the Corinthians, he says: "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." I Corinthians 4: 15. This makes the work of a truly spiritual man a life-giving and a spiritually creative work. What a blessed thing it is that a spirit-filled life may convey of its fullness to another soul. What a glorious opportunity that he whom God has touched from above with His spirit may beget others, as Paul did, unto a lively hope in Jesus Christ through the Gospels.

Nicodemus in his amazement at the greatness and vastness of the idea of the new birth here announced said: "How can these things be?" And well he might have asked that question, for all these spiritual processes are full of mystery and difficult of comprehension. But the facts of the natural life and of the natural birth are just as wonderful and just as difficult of comprehension. Life in any and in all of its forms is a mysterious and incomprehensible something, whose manifestations we can observe, whose growth and decay we can discern, but whose real essence and nature we must always remain ignorant of. The spiritual life is no exception. It is no more and no less wonderful than life in any of its diverse forms. As Drummond tells us in his "Natural Law in the Spiritual World": "Even science has its mysteries, none more inscrutable than around the science of Life. We have seen that the spiritual life is an endowment from the spiritual world and that the Living Spirit of Christ dwells in the Christian. The breath of God blowing where it listeth, touches with its mystery of life the dead souls of men, bears them across the bridgeless gulf between the natural and the spiritual, between the spiritually inorganic and the spiritually organic, endows them with its own high qualities and develops within them these new and secret faculties, by which those who are born again are said to see the Kingdom of God. But what

more does science know of life? Nothing. It knows nothing further about its origin in detail. It knows nothing about its ultimate nature. It cannot ever define it. Where there is exceptional mystery in the spiritual world it will generally be found that there is a corresponding mystery in the natural world."

Two facts concerning the spiritual life are evident and they are very precious, namely, that we can experience and observe its presence and that we can assist in its promulgation. As in the natural world, the evidences of life and growth are manifest everywhere. We cannot be mistaken about that. So in the spiritual life. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The movements and operations of the spirit may not be discernible to the natural eye, but the presence of the spirit may be experienced in the heart and observed in the lives of others. The movements of the spirit are not limited by set bounds nor circumscribed by arbitrary conditions. It does not reveal itself alike to all souls. Its manner of operation is varied. As in the case of the wind, it may come with mighty power and shake the towering giants of the forests to the very roots, or it may come as the evening zephyrs come, so quietly, so calmly and so gently, that its refreshing coolness will be felt as a gladsome presence without sign or token of excitement.

And even if the operation of the spirit upon our souls in the new birth should, perchance, be so faint in its presence and so gentle in its influence as to preclude, seemingly, all thought of supernatural interference and divine presence in the process, shall we, on this account, call its reality into question or doubt its presence altogether? "By their fruits ye shall know them." If the real fruits of the new birth are present, surely the spirit itself must be present too. If we know ourselves as belonging to God, by a voluntary and complete surrender to His influence, if we have perceived the gracious operations of God's spirit upon our hearts in a warmer love for His word and in a deeper interest in His kingdom, if we are conscious of a strong and unfaltering trust in God's eternal goodness and infinite mercy for forgiveness



of sin and for help in the life that now is, and for hope and confidence in the life that is to come, then we may rest contented. The Divine Presence is in all gracious operations of the spirit upon the soul, whether with power or with gentleness and peace. Over the portals of St. Paul's Cathedral in London are the words of the famous epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of that massive temple of God: "If you are looking for his monument, look about you." So we may say, if you ask, where is the Divine Hand manifested in a life whose fundamental preference is Christlike, "Look about you." The evidence of divine workmanship and the assurance of divine presence is on every hand. God is love and he who dwells in love dwells in God.

Whether we regard the New Birth as an entirely new creation begotten by the spirit of God in the moral life of man, or whether we consider the New Birth as an awakening and a breaking forth into fuller life of the spiritual nature of man, by the vitalizing operations of the Holy Spirit, is immaterial. As long as men are not agreed as to the origin of the human soul in the natural birth, some holding to the theory of transmission of life and some to that of a new creation, so long we may consider the spiritual phase of this question in the same light. The older theologians have usually held to the theory that the spiritual life in man is really created in the New Birth, that the spiritual life had really no existence in man until it was begotten in the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Thus Drummond stoutly maintains this view by quoting the words of the Saviour as proof: He that "hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son hath not life." Others again maintain that every soul has spiritual capacities at birth, which develop with the other powers of the soul, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit are brought into full consciousness at a certain period in the soul's growth and development, and that this awakening of the new-born powers of the soul to its full conscious existence constitutes the New Birth. Be that as it may. To all intents and purposes, the full conscious power of the spiritual life has its origin and beginning in the regenerative experiences of conversion or

in the soul's conscious awakening through gradual growth and development to new spiritual powers and capacities. And what is a most striking and impressive fact, the awakened soul under the influence of the spirit may be the instrument of awakening other souls into full consciousness of divine power, and thus in a sense be the bearers or creators of spiritual life in others. If Paul could say of Onesimus, "I have begotten you through the Gospel," and of the Corinthians, "For in Jesus Christ I have begotten you through the Gospel," then surely our mission is no less fruitful of life-creative influences, and no less potent with spirit-awakening powers, provided we allow ourselves to be used as instruments of the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of the living truth, to bring spiritual life and health to a dead and dying world. This is indeed a glorious mission.

The Evangelist Torrey describes the process of the New Birth as follows: "In the New Birth, the Word of God is the seed; the human heart is the soil; the preacher of the word is the sower, and drops the seed into the soil. God by his spirit opens the heart to receive the seed; the hearer believes. The spirit quickens the seed into life in the receptive heart; the new divine nature springs up out of the divine Word; the believer is born again, created anew, made alive, passed out of death into life."

## **5. The Prodigal Son. A Typical Case of Sin and Repentance.**

We now come to a typical case of sin and redemption. The story of the Prodigal Son is a story of simple human life and also of divine love and compassion. In the terms for conversion previously considered, no account has been taken of God's part in the changes brought about. God's love and God's forgiveness were not considered. Emphasis was intentionally placed upon the sinner's part in the transaction. The divine willingness to forgive sin and to forgive the sinner was merely assumed as a matter which needed no proof.

Neither was anything said of the origin of sin nor of the influences and circumstances which usually lead to sin and guilt. The fact of sin was assumed. The universal existence of moral

disorder was recognized as something which needed attention and which called for serious consideration. Conversion was, therefore, considered from the sinner's standpoint as a turning away from evil to the good or as putting off the old man and putting on the new man, a crucifying the old life, with its consequent renewal of the new life, and as a New Birth or a New Life with its attendant consequences. These are the essential things, because they affect the sinner himself and because without these subjective changes, there can be no real conversion. As Prof. Coe says in his "Religion of a Mature Mind": "Conversion is the act of the sinner himself. No one can doubt this who reads the New Testament in the Greek. Whoever turns away from a life of sin to a life of obedience to Christian principle is a converted man. Saying this does not deny, but merely leaves out of consideration, the part that God plays in coöperation with the repentant sinner. It merely insists upon the plain fact that to be converted is to adopt the Christian principle of life, and that this is an act of the sinner's own will, and that his status in the kingdom can, therefore, be determined by what he chooses to be and to do."

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, however, which has been called the "Pearl" and "Crown" of all the parables, the various elements that enter into the processes of sin, remorse, repentance, forgiveness and restoration are given with an unerring hand and with a vivid touch of reality. This parable shows very vividly and impressively the course of sin and the necessary steps of conversion on the sinner's side. But it also shows, as very few passages of Scripture, the supreme and all-important part of God in the sinner's regeneration and restoration. The parable is an epitome of human sin and of divine love. No touch is omitted. The picture is complete. The Prodigal's sin and alienation from his father, his life of self-indulgence and debauchery "in a far country," the coming of the prodigal to himself and the full realization of his lost and pitiful condition, the firm resolution on his part to return to his father and throw himself upon the father's mercy and forgiveness, the son's welcome reception by his father and his complete restoration and forgiveness,

all these steps in the prodigal's sin, redemption and salvation are portrayed with a simplicity but with a directness and an impressiveness which go straight to the heart. The prodigal is a type and hence represents hosts of others in their experiences of sin and salvation. And because the prodigal is a type of thousands of other wayward sons, and because such numbers of human souls have followed in the prodigal's footsteps and have tasted, with the prodigal, the cup of bitterness and the dregs of remorse, and because countless thousands of others have experienced, like the prodigal, the utter hollowness and emptiness of a life of sin and sordid enjoyment and have resolved in their moments of reason, when they "came to themselves," to "arise and to go to my father" and have there found forgiveness and peace in the loving arms of a father's mercy, I say because of all these considerations the case of the prodigal son serves, perhaps, as the most perfect and the most complete epitome of the terrible tragedy of human sin and divine redemption from sin through suffering and love. Here we have a picture of sin in its secret inception and open manifestation, of consequent guilt and shame in its most attractive guise of good-fellowship and of unsatisfying pleasure, of keen remorse over wasted powers and opportunities and of bitter anguish at the remembrance of a father's unrequited love and unappreciated goodness, of a heroic resolution to atone for past remissness and to implore an undeserving forgiveness at his father's hands, and of such an unexpected and an overpowering outburst of a father's pent-up love in ample forgiveness and joyous restoration, that the world has been moved to tears of pity, of repentance and rejoicing in all ages by its contemplation. A closer study of this incomparable story of human weakness and of divine mercy and strength will surely be especially helpful in the light of what we have already considered.

THE PRODIGAL'S SIN AND ESTRANGEMENT FROM HIS FATHER. The prodigal's sin consisted chiefly in his unfilial attitude of disobedience and disloyalty in asking for himself what did not belong to him. "Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." This was his bold and shameless request. But, as a

matter of fact, he had no claim on his father as was implied in his request. As long as the father lived all his goods belonged to him and were his own possessions. The son had no right, either legal or moral, to request any for himself. It was insubordination on the part of the son, asking for what did not belong to him, requesting for his own personal selfish enjoyment what was unlawful to him. This is really at the root of all sin, a desire on the part of the sinner to have for himself and to use in self-gratification what really does not belong to him and what is unlawful and, therefore, sinful for him to have. All sin is selfishness and all selfishness is sin, and consists largely, if not entirely, in the attitude of the prodigal, when he asked for himself the portion of the goods which really did not belong to him, but which he desired to spend upon himself in sinful pleasure and shameful debauchery. Our impulses and passions are continually urging us on to ask for self-indulgence and self-gratification in the things which are unlawful for us to have. "Sin is the transgression of the law," we are told. It consists in doing the things which are forbidden or of leaving undone the things which are required. In the last analysis our sins very largely grow out of our secret desire or our open demand for what does not belong to us by way of enjoyment or indulgence, or in failing to render filial obedience to the will of the kind father in loving service. The prodigal was guilty of both. We, as sinners, share the prodigal's attitude, consequently partake of his guilt. To be sure, the father was under no obligation to grant the son's request. But because of our freedom of choice, God allows us our way and makes us take the consequences of our acts.

The prodigal's departure from home and his estrangement from his father in a far country was but an incident or a consequence of his rebellious attitude. Sin always separates. Selfishness and love cannot dwell together in peace. The journeying to a far country and the spending of his substance in riotous living were but the natural and logical consequences of an unfilial attitude and of selfish requests for indulgence in the things which did not belong to him. The first step of this lamentable downfall was a

secret desire in the heart of the younger son for what was not lawful for him to have. The secret desire brought forth the forbidden act and that involved the foolish son in a long train of evil consequences, with separation, estrangement, self-gratification and utter abandonment of the noblest that was in him. Sin seeks a hiding place. Adam sought to get away from God by hiding. His descendants have followed his example in sin and in seeking to hide and get away from God. The estrangement is always on the part of the sinner, not on the part of God. The prodigal's father was not estranged. He had nothing but sorrow and compassion for his wayward son. And this is true of our Heavenly Father. He grieves for His wayward and rebellious children. He sought Adam in the garden and called, "Adam, where art thou?" He has sought His disobedient children ever since. He has come to seek and to save, in Jesus Christ, that which was lost. The estrangement of the human soul from God is always on the part of the soul itself, in that it voluntarily and deliberately refuses to yield obedience and service to its Heavenly Father; and in requesting for itself "goods" and pleasures and self-gratification which are unlawful for the soul to have. And in seeking forbidden pleasures the soul removes itself from the happy associations of the Father's house to a "far country" of sin and forbidden pleasure.

THE PRODIGAL'S REMORSE AND SORROW FOR SIN. A life of self-indulgence and dissolution did not satisfy the foolish young man. Forbidden pleasures last but for a season. They always leave the heart hungry and the spirit unsatisfied and the higher wants unmet. With his substance wasted in riotous living, and his merry-making friends abandoning him after he was unable to minister to their pleasure and with the pangs of an unsatisfied hunger gnawing at him while he himself was seeking to satisfy his physical wants with the "husks which the swine did eat," the prodigal began to reflect over his pitiful condition and to come to his senses. He "came to himself." His reason reasserted itself. The remembrance of his father's house, with its servants in comfort and plenty and the realization of his own poor miserable condition, made him say to himself,

"How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare and I suffer with hunger." That was a physical pang. The remembrance of his father's loving kindness and how he spurned it and abused it by his unfilial conduct, causing his father sorrow and pain, together with the solemn consciousness of his own unworthiness and sinfulness, must have given him a keener pang. Alone, and in solitude, needy and unsatisfied, with the blackness and worthlessness of his own life ever present before him, with sorrow and remorse for his past conduct, he turned in his hopelessness and remorse to the thought of his father's house and his father's plenty. Might he not there find a refuge, and on bended knee, beg for the privilege of humble service? "I will arise and go to my father and will say, father I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Such penitence and genuine humility and utter self-abasement! Surely there was nothing wanting on the prodigal's part to make the cup of his bitterness full to overflowing. Such humility is precious in the sight of God. Such emptiness of self God can fill with joy and gladness. Such gnawing spiritual hunger God delights to satisfy with bounteous plenty.

What an impressive fact of the disappointing and unsatisfying results of a life of sin. To enjoy the "pleasures of sin for a season" is usually followed by loathing and by an unsatisfied hunger. Sin is disappointing and its punishment usually stands in intimate relation to the sin. So with the prodigal. "He, who would not, as a son, be treated liberally by his father, is compelled to be the servant and bondsman of a foreign master; he who would not be ruled by God, is compelled to serve the devil; he who would not abide in his father's royal palace is sent to the fields among swine; he who would not dwell among brethren and princes, is obliged to be the servant and companion of brutes; he who would not feed on the bread of angels, petitions in his hunger for the husks of the swine." Sin never satisfies the higher demands of the soul. It leaves hunger, a desire for husks. It awakens recollections of better things. Its

unsatisfying character was the prodigal's salvation. It left him impoverished physically and morally and this was a mighty help to his regeneration.

**HIS RESOLUTION TO RETURN TO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.** The prodigal was not content to remain in his state of poverty and estrangement. He was not only sincerely sick of his past life and thoroughly penitent for his past sins, but he was also exceedingly anxious to get back to his father's house and make amends, as far as possible, for what he had done. So he resolved within himself: "I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him, father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." This was the turning point in his life that carried with it the power of change. Sorrow for past sin, a desire to return to the father's house and to enjoy the father's bounty was not sufficient, though it was a necessary condition which led to his saving resolution. "I will arise." This was an act of will on his part, a deliberate attitude of the soul which led him into sin and guilt in the first place and which now in his extremity will be the immediate cause of his redemption and reformation. This cannot be too strongly emphasized. It is the most vital and the most important and the most potential element in all the processes of conversion. It is the crucial test of conversion. When the prodigal said to himself in the full strength of his sin-sick soul, "I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him, father I have sinned," and then when he followed up his resolution by the necessary course of action involved in the resolution, then the battle was won, the tide was turned, the course was now backward to the father and upward to the light. To have resolved mightily in his heart to leave his old life, to throw himself upon his father's mercy and to ask his father's forgiveness and restoration, was all that the young man could do so far as his subjective attitude was concerned. But this was much. And then to follow up his noble resolution with honest, earnest and sincere effort, in the right direction, was what made his resolution effective. The supreme moment is always when the soul resolves within itself, and solemnly and



firmly draws its full strength together for the decisive and fateful moment of decision and consequent action. These are the moments in the life of individuals which completely change and entirely revolutionize their lives.

THE FATHER'S TREATMENT OF THE PRODIGAL. The prodigal had done his part. He had made his solemn resolution. He had retraced his steps without hesitancy. He had thrown himself upon his father's mercy, with the confession: "Father I have sinned, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But do not cast me away in anger, but have mercy upon me in thy pity and find a place for me, however humble and lowly, in thy spiritual household." His rebellion was gone. His self-sufficiency and pride were humbled. He made no plea of extenuating circumstances and showed no disposition to lay the blame on some one else. It was *his* rebellious heart that had done it. It was *his* fault that was the cause of it. He knew it only too well. He would simply make a full and complete acknowledgment and trust his father's love and mercy for the rest. It was this attitude which made it possible for his father to receive him graciously. It is such an attitude of heart in the sinner which makes forgiveness and restoration at the hands of God always possible.

And surely the penitent son was not long in doubt. What a picture we have of the father's unbounded love. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion and ran on his neck and kissed him." Before the repentant son had ever uttered a word or opened his mouth to speak in confession, or framed his petition for pardon, his long-suffering father had seen him in the distance, and had already pronounced the words of forgiveness in his own heart. The father's love anticipated the request of the son for forgiveness. Yea, he had been patiently waiting for the son's return. He had suffered untold anguish over his son's waywardness and was grieved beyond measure over his son's absence from home. The heart of God is always more grieved over the sinner's waywardness than human tongue can tell. John G. Paton in his autobiography tells of a praying old mother in Scotland whose son had left home to be

lost in the larger world of the British Empire. But the mother's heart clung to the hope of a return. "Every night she prayed for that event, and before closing the door, threw it wide open and peered into the darkness with a cry, 'come home, my boy Walter, your mother wearies sair.' And every morning, at early break of day, for a period of more than twenty years, she toddled up from her cottage door at Johnsfield, Lockerbie, to a little round hill called the 'Corbic Dykes' and gazing with tear-filled eyes towards the south, for the form of her returning boy, praying the Lord God to keep him safe and restore him to her yet again." What a picture of a Heavenly Father's untiring love and passionate yearning for the return of His wandering children.

The son's forgiveness and restoration was complete and past all expectation. There was not one element lacking. He had framed a form of confession to be made to his father, but the words died on his lips unexpressed in the father's assuring act of welcome. He had hoped to take his place among his father's servants who had "bread enough and to spare," but instead he was received in princely fashion and restored to his rightful place of sonship in his father's family. He had longed to eat of the humble fare which fell to the lot of his father's hired servants, but instead the father ordered a bountiful feast to be prepared for him and to be served in the presence of rejoicing friends with royal splendor, in his special honor. The prodigal hoped he might lay aside his tattered garments—fit emblems of his wasted life—and be clothed in the plain and simple garb of self-respect and decency; but instead his father had him arrayed in the best garments of his princely wardrobe, with shoes on his travel-stained feet and a ring on his finger, clothed with all the emblems of a royal welcome and reception. And there was great rejoicing. "Let us eat and be merry for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

What an impressive picture this is of God's loving attitude towards his wayward children. Whatever our theories may be about the forgiveness of sin theologically, there can be not a particle of doubt in the mind of anyone as to God's attitude

towards the repentant sinner and His willingness and readiness to forgive sin. He does not only wait for the return of the prodigal and see him in the distance and run out with outstretched arms to meet him and welcome him and forgive him; he is tireless in his efforts to seek and to find the lost children of men, as is shown by the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. God has been seeking his children ever since the first recorded prodigal alienated himself from his Maker by his own sin and hid himself in the garden, to be startled by the words, "Adam, where art thou?" The prophets, as God's messengers, sought to bring back the children of Israel to the worship of Jehovah, by urgent and repeated invitations. Jesus himself came as unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel "to seek and to save that which was lost." And He represents himself as the Good Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep, carrying them home in his bosom, gently caring for them and gathering them into his fold. It is a beautiful and touching thought, that God in all the ages has been endeavoring, through all the saving influences at His command, to bring back His wandering children to Himself and restore them to their full prerogative of sonship in His own spiritual Kingdom.

There can surely be no doubt in the mind of any of God's children as to His attitude in the matter of forgiveness. His love is boundless and envelops all. His hand is ever stretched forth to raise from the dust any truly penitent sinner and make him stand on his feet in self-respect and confidence. His ear is ever open to listen to the cry of His suffering children and come to their rescue. God is not slow to forgive nor sparing with His mercy. No, God is slow to anger and "plenteous in mercy." It is not necessary for the penitent soul to storm the courts of heaven with agonizing prayers and with long-continued petitions before the portals open and peace and assurance is spoken to the trembling soul. The sinner's submission and surrender must be complete. This is the condition. To such souls the acceptance is complete. Why should the sin-sick soul not take courage and come. Let no one doubt, but take God at His word and come.

Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings within and fears without,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

## PART TWO.

# CONVERSION THROUGH CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

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That the confirmed and hardened sinner should need a radical change of heart and life in conversion is self-evident. It is the teaching of Scripture and the testimony of experience. On the other hand, that children of Christian parents and surrounded by Christian influences should be able to enter into their spiritual inheritance without any striking radical change in their conscious moral life ought to be equally self-evident. It, too, is clearly taught in Scripture and attested by experience. One is the process of conversion through moral revolution, the other through moral evolution. By the one method the spiritual nature is "transformed" from a state of moral unworthiness to one of moral worthiness. By the other process the spiritual nature is "conformed" in its growth and development to the life and character of Jesus Christ, who is not only the author, but also the finisher of our faith.

And yet there is no agreement on the part of Christian teachers and professors on this point. Some stoutly maintain that every soul must pass through a more or less radical change of heart before it can be considered in a state of salvation. Some would even go so far as to claim that unless time, place and circumstances of conversion are distinctly remembered there is something essential lacking in one's spiritual state. Others again believe with Dwight L. Moody that children may be so carefully trained in Christian families that they may never be conscious of a striking change in their lives. Yet such a change must be assumed as having taken place, whether they are conscious of it or not, or

else they cannot be considered genuinely converted. That some of the most beautiful Christians have never known a negative period in their lives must be admitted by all earnest and sincere Christian believers who place character above profession. Whether we assume an unconscious process of conversion for the Christians of the gradual-growth type or regard them as the product of careful Christian training is a matter of small moment. The result is the same. It cannot be denied that the Bible makes ample provision for just such cases. And that many earnest, lovable Christian spirits have come into the kingdom by the gradual process of being "conformed to the image" of Jesus Christ through Christian growth and development is richly illustrated by the spiritual experience of some of the world's most beautiful Christian characters.

## **I. Salvation through Christian Culture a Scriptural Doctrine.**

That the language of the church currently used with reference to conversion, has been largely in terms implying a radical change cannot be denied. Such terms as "Repent ye," "Regeneration," "the New Birth," "Putting off the Old Man and Putting on the New Man," "Crucified with Christ," and similar expressions do most assuredly imply a radical process of transformation.

This was the language used by the apostles and their successors in converting heathen and non-Christian peoples to Christianity. And these are the terms which have been used by the church ever since its aggressive work of bringing the world to Christ. But the mission of bringing the whole world to Christ is a broad and comprehensive one. There are at least four distinguishable duties included under the single notion of "converting the world" and of making disciples of all nations: "First, heathen or non-Christian peoples must be made Christian; second, non-Christian persons in Christian communities must be led to Christ; third, children born in Christian

families must be kept for Christ and prevented from becoming hostile or indifferent; fourth, Christian believers must be built up in the faith and in the application of Christian principles to all parts of individual and social life." It is very evident that the terms for conversion implying a radical change are applicable to the first two duties referred to. But to use the same terms for conversion when the last two duties are under consideration is manifestly improper and unfair. The conversion of the heathen and the ungodly requires one kind of language, because a radical transformation must be emphasized in such work, but the training up of children in the Christian faith requires another kind of language, or else the use of one set of terms with a changed meaning.

When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," He was talking to an adult member of the Jewish faith. To make the term "New Birth" applicable, therefore, to the development of the child's spiritual nature would manifestly be doing violence to the import of the Master's words. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians and to the Colossians about "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man," he was addressing men and women who had come out of heathen darkness into the pure light of the Christian faith, and hence the appropriateness of the language used under the circumstances. But to make this language of Paul's universally applicable to the spiritual experience of children reared in Christian homes and under Christian influences would be both unjust and unscriptural. To have used the language intended for the regeneration of the hardened sinner, requiring a radical transformation, for all types of religious experience indiscriminately, has wrought confusion and havoc in the minds of thousands of earnest, struggling souls who were not able to discriminate properly in the matter. To claim, for instance, that children of Christian parentage and training must be "born again" in the sense that the immoral and the ungodly must be born again is to misinterpret the meaning of Christ's words and to ignore the fundamental character of the child's spiritual nature.

There is an appropriate language implying a radical trans-

formation for the conversion of the worldly, the indifferent, the immoral. Let it be used, therefore, in accordance with its historical origin and for its intended purpose. In this connection such terms as the "New Birth," "Regeneration," the "Old Man," and the "New Man," "Crucified with Christ," "Born again" and others of similar character are not only appropriate but necessary and indispensable. But when it comes to the matter of salvation for the growing Christian child, then such terms are inappropriate and misleading and frequently lead to intellectual confusion and to spiritual hardship. When the Bible speaks of the process of conversion through Christian culture and education, it uses such terms as imply life, growth, development, nurture, good soil, good seed, fruit. Or the child's spiritual relationship to God is conceived of under the figure of a Son in the Father's house, or of a Lamb in the care of a Good Shepherd, or else in the language of trustfulness and childlike dependence upon God. The same Jesus who spoke to Nicodemus concerning the "New Birth" also spoke to the loving mothers who brought their children to Him that He might bless them; "Suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." For the adult and hardened sinner, transformation; for the growing child of religious parentage and training, "formation" of character by a positive process of building up the right spiritual activities and forces in the child's growing personality. It will be instructive to consider the more positive process of spiritual culture and character-formation and to discover what a wealth of material there is, both in the language of Scripture and in the testimony of human experience, as bearing on this phase of the question. The importance of the child's spiritual life and the necessity and supreme value of wise Christian training for children have never been recognized at their full value. The Bible furnishes rich material for the contention that the child of Christian parents and of careful Christian training may, by a process of gradual growth and unfolding of his spiritual nature, enter into the full possession of his spiritual inheritance without any radical break or conflict or strain in his spiritual experience.



## 1. The Old Testament View of the Child's Religious State.

The Jews regarded their children as members of the theocratic kingdom by virtue of their birth. Great stress was laid upon the training of children so that the special revelation to the fathers might be carefully handed down to the children. There was no theory of conversion for those born into the old dispensation. They were already children of Abraham, and they were to be reared in the faith of the fathers, with special reference to the promises which were not only to the fathers but also to their children and children's children. Thus Abraham was made the friend of God and taken into the counsels of the Most High, because he would do his duty by his children and bring them up in the ways of the Lord: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken concerning him." Genesis 18: 19. Moses, the great lawgiver, was a remarkable illustration of what may be done in childhood to determine the character of a man in mature years. The teaching of his pious mother made such an impression upon his youthful mind that "all the learning of the Egyptians" could not eradicate it. He chose to suffer with his own people rather than enjoy the "treasures of Egypt." When the law of the Passover was fixed it was provided that the fathers should instruct their children properly in the deeper significance of the observance in such words as these: "And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever. And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." Exodus 12: 25, 27. The duty of religious instruction is enjoined still more emphatically upon the children of Israel in the words of Deuteronomy: "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach

them diligently *unto thy children* and shalt talk of them when thou sittest down in thine house and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." Deuteronomy 6:6, 7. And again: "I will make them hear my words that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that they teach them to their children.*" Deuteronomy 4:10.

The peculiar rite for Jewish children was circumcision. All male children had to be circumcised; also all male children of strangers living within their borders were expected to be circumcised. Every child of Jewish parents was supposed to be a member of the Jewish faith. The rite of circumcision was the seal of his adoption. He was to be reared in this faith. He was to be taught the accepted doctrines and the special dispensations of Providence peculiar to this people from his youth up by his parents. Arrived at years of discretion, he was to become a full member of the Jewish religion by virtue of his voluntary acceptance of his father's God as his own personal God, and by a voluntary acceptance of the faith and practices of the fathers as his own personal faith and practice. No process of conversion to the faith was required for the normal Jewish child. It was only through voluntary apostasy or through gross idolatry that separation from the Abrahamic covenant resulted and that consequently a process of conversion and restoration became necessary. The normal Jewish child, under the covenant made with Abraham, was to be regarded as a member of the household of faith by virtue of his birth. He was to be educated and trained as a member of the Jewish faith and he was to continue a member as long as he lived by virtue of his voluntary acceptance of all which membership in the Abrahamic covenant implied. Membership was not gained by conversion, but by birth and adoption, by training and culture. Conversion was the prerogative of those who were renegades or of those who wanted to be taken into the covenant from outside the pale of promise. The normal process was training and culture within the kingdom; and at no time was the Jewish child to be considered as a stranger to the covenant promises or as

unfitted by age and experience to participate in the spiritual privileges of the kingdom.

## **2. The Attitude of Jesus toward Children.**

The attitude of Jesus toward children with reference to their membership in the kingdom was the same as that of the pious Jew of His time. Jesus regarded the children as belonging to the kingdom, and only through voluntary apostasy could they lose their covenant rights and privileges. Jesus himself was brought to the temple by his parents soon after his birth and presented to the Lord with thank-offerings of praise and rejoicing, in accordance with the custom of his time. As a child, he grew up in the fear of the Lord, carefully instructed in all the requirements of the Jewish faith and faithfully taught in all the accepted standards of tradition and revelation. At twelve he astonished the doctors in the temple by the character of the questions he asked and answered. Under the conscientious instruction of his pious parents and guided by the spirit of his Father the boy "grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Jesus was not converted into the kingdom. He was born into the kingdom. And he was raised and nurtured in the kingdom. And when He came into the full consciousness of His divine mission, He was already in the kingdom by birth, by education and by conscious choice. The full realization of His divine origin and mission dawned upon Him, not by way of a radical change of conversion into the kingdom, but by a special process of inner illumination and self-realization within the kingdom itself. This is significant and worthy of careful consideration. As the Jewish child was within the Abrahamic covenant by virtue of his physical and spiritual descent from Abraham, so the child of Christian parents and Christian training is by virtue of the divine life, operative in children as in grown people, a member of God's spiritual kingdom and needs no striking conversion to be brought into the kingdom. This was evidently the view of Jesus and it was beautifully illustrated both by His teaching and by His example.

In answer to the question, Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus pointed to a little child and said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3, 4. They, the ambitious and self-satisfied Jews, were to be converted and become lowly in spirit and meek in disposition as the children. The children under consideration needed no conversion. They were already members of the kingdom of heaven. Those were to become great in the kingdom of heaven only as they appropriated the spirit of childhood unto themselves. The children were not only members of the kingdom by virtue of their childhood, innocence and trustfulness, but they were really the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And only as the Jews would appropriate the lowly child-like faith of God's little children could they expect to be great in the kingdom of heaven. The child-spirit holds the first place in heaven. "For," says Jesus, "I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 18:10. What an impressive thought. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Matthew 18:10. Can we despise them more effectually than by considering them children of wrath and by expecting them to grow up in sin and disobedience that we might later convert them by a powerful demonstration of saving grace? "To deny them a place in the church, to neglect their spiritual and moral culture, to underestimate the value of their early aspirations toward God, can any form of despising be more effectual than this?" "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He desires that not one of His own spiritual children should perish. He would save the children from becoming lost. He would throw all the saving influences around the growing child to keep it as much from the contamination of the world as possible. He would gather the lambs in His bosom and protect them from the

ravages of wild beasts. No, He wants them all kept. Each one is precious in His sight. "Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:14.

And what could be more touchingly beautiful than the picture of Jesus blessing the little children? Mark tells us that some mothers "brought young children to Christ that He should touch them." That was the utmost they had hoped. If the blessed Master would only lay His hands upon them and touch them, they would be so grateful. But his disciples, no doubt, thought they were too young to understand, and that therefore the Master should not be hindered in His great work by such trifles. And so they "rebuked those that brought them" for their boldness and their presumption. But Jesus was displeased, or, as the Revised Version has it, He "was moved with indignation" and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 10:14. Forbid them not. Do not keep them back or think them too insignificant or too unimportant. For "of such" is the kingdom of heaven. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them." Matthew 10:15, 16. And the mothers' hearts must have leaped with joy, and the disciples must have been deeply pained and humiliated by their rashness and their lack of appreciation of the Master's attitude. The spirit of the children thus brought was an emblem of true Christian humility and simple, childlike trustfulness. Pious mothers still desire to bring their children to Jesus. And they bring them in secret prayer or they bring them through baptismal consecration or they bring them as Hannah brought the little Samuel to be consecrated by public prayer to His service. And Jesus now, as then, "takes them up in His arms, puts his hands upon them and blesses them" by His spiritual presence and benediction. "A little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6. It is still the same. The child-spirit is still the dominant power. The kingdom of heaven is still for such as have the spirit of little children. They still teach us humility and guilelessness

and implicit faith and simple trust in God. Well could the poet say of them :

“They are idols of hearts and of household,  
 They are angels of God in disguise;  
 His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses  
 His glory still gleams in their eyes!

“Oh, these truants from home and from heaven,  
 They have made me more manly and mild;  
 And I know how Jesus could liken  
 The kingdom of God to a child.”

It is very evident that the doctrine of “infant damnation” or “total depravity” for children has no justification either in the words or in the example of Jesus. For Him the child was not an object of divine wrath, but of infinite love and compassion. For Him the best qualification for spiritual sonship was the possession of the child-spirit. If the spirit of the child was the finest type of Christian discipleship, then surely the possessor of the child-spirit—the child itself—must be a member of Christ’s spiritual kingdom. Christ’s view manifestly is that the child of Christian parents is born into the kingdom, that he is a member of the kingdom in childhood by virtue of his descent from his spiritual ancestry, that the youth is to remain in the kingdom by voluntarily accepting the spiritual requirements of adult membership and that he is to remain always in the kingdom as the sheep are to remain with the shepherd and not to depart from the fold. He does not need to be converted into the kingdom. That is the essential requirement of the renegades and the wanderers and the prodigals. It is the blessed prerogative of the Christian child to grow up in the kingdom and never know any prolonged period of apostasy or of alienation from God, and consequently never be under the painful necessity of being ushered into the kingdom through any process of radical conversion.

### 3. The Parables of Jesus on Salvation through Christian Culture.

A number of parables convey the same conception of the Christian life. The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son all assume that the normal condition is not a lost one. The lost had to be sought and found. Many of the parables about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13 contain the same underlying thought. The sower sows seed and it germinates and brings forth fruit. But the life principle is in the seed and it needs only the proper conditions of soil and moisture to grow and develop. In all the various parables of the sower with his seed as illustrating the principles of the kingdom of heaven, there is either tacitly implied or definitely expressed the idea of a life-principle in the seed which is capable of germinating, the possibility of growth and development under favorable conditions and the expectation of fruit of the same kind as was potentially held in the seed. Nothing could be more suggestive of the child's spiritual nature and growth than the parables which speak of seed and germination, of growth and development, of joy in expected fruit and of disappointment in a harvest of tares and weeds. The soil is the human soul. The seed is the word of truth which germinates under the vivifying influences of the spirit. With the hindrance of choking tares removed and under the energizing influences of God's Holy Spirit the budding seed will grow and bring forth fruit, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

"*The parable of the Lost Sheep* teaches most explicitly that the normal condition is to be in the fold, not away in the mountains and lost to the shepherd. Jesus compares himself to a Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and who is known of them. "The sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." John 10:3, 4. The Shepherd Psalm conveys the same beautiful thought. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie

down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." And what the Good Shepherd is pleased to do for His sheep He will most assuredly do for His lambs. As He provides pasture and refreshing waters for His sheep so He does for the lambs of His flock. And as His protection extends to all the grown members of His flock, so in like manner it is extended to the helpless little lambs which really need His protection and care more than the grown sheep do. Yea, "he gathereth the lambs in his bosom," and carries them to safety and rest. The picture of Jesus as a shepherd, with His shepherd's crook in His hands, with His trustful flock around Him and with some helpless little lamb resting in His bosom, is strikingly emblematic of Christ's attitude. Occasionally a careless or wilful sheep will wander away and become lost, and then the good shepherd will leave the ninety and nine in safety "in the shelter of the fold," and hunt for the lost sheep until he has found it and returned it to the flock with rejoicing. The normal place for the sheep is with the flock, under the personal care and direction of the shepherd. And this is peculiarly true of the lambs. They belong to the flock. They are to grow up with the flock. They are to remain under the careful oversight of the shepherd. This is their normal and rightful place. And it is only through an act of carelessness or wilfulness that an erring little lamb would stray away from the flock and become lost. To stray away is the act of becoming lost. To stay with the flock and with the shepherd is the rightful attitude for the growing little lamb as it is for the full-grown sheep.

The growing lambs are in special need of the shepherd's care and oversight. They are growing and full of life. They lack experience and wisdom. They are often wilful and thoughtless in their actions, guided more by impulse and less by judgment. And so the lambs of God's kingdom are to be regarded as the special object of love and oversight on the part of the shepherds who have them in charge—parents, teachers, pastors and friends. And this is why Jesus enjoined upon Peter, as one of his last requests, that he should feed His lambs. "Simon, son of Jonas,



lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord thou knowest that I love thee; He saith unto him, *Feed my lambs.*" John 21:15. Oh, how we should endeavor to "feed the lambs" by proper care and instruction, by precept and example, by all the influences God has given into our hands, so that they may not only grow up as faithful and dutiful members of God's spiritual flock, but that they may always remain within the spiritual fold in the presence of and under the loving care of Jesus himself as the Good Shepherd!

*The parable of the Prodigal Son* is perhaps the most typical case of sin and redemption to be found throughout the Bible. The prodigal was in his father's household from his youth up. He enjoyed the advantages of home training and beautiful surroundings. He was a son by birth and by adoption as well as by choice and election. He was not "converted" to sonship from without. He was "converted" to rebellion and prodigality from within the kingdom. His rightful and normal place was under his father's roof, subject to his father's care and authority and obedient to his father's will. Through a deliberate act on his part he conceived the thought and committed the deed which removed him from his father's house and presence and made him an alien and a rebel "in a far country."

The "elder son" remained at home. This was his rightful and proper place. He enjoyed uninterruptedly his father's presence and benediction. He may have had moments of temporary disobedience in thought, or word or deed, but those were transient. His fixed and unalterable purpose was one of filial regard and of ungrudging service. He enjoyed to the fullest measure, from his youth up, all the wealth of affection and all the unbroken confidence and approval of personal regard which a loving father could bestow upon a dutiful son. The younger son's return was the occasion of calling forth into tangible expression the father's unbounded love and affection. The elder son mistook this as an act of partiality. But he was mistaken. He may have been unappreciative of his father's less demonstrative, but no less affectionate treatment of him during his unbroken intercourse with him at home. This was perhaps natural. We are all liable to

lack appreciation of God's goodness and mercy to the fullest extent because they are so all-pervading in their presence and so unbroken in their beneficent ministrations. But the father reminded the elder son of his superior position and assured him of his personal favor and appreciation by saying: "Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine." His portion was the greater of the two, his position the more to be envied and his uninterrupted loyalty the more to be commended.

We are too frequently inclined to commend the course of the younger in his act of complete self-surrender upon his return home and forget the more praiseworthy act of unbroken loyalty on the part of the elder brother. The career of the younger son was more spectacular, but the career of the older son more commendable. The expression of unbounded love on the part of the father only threw into bolder relief the utter unworthiness of the prodigal's course. The younger son was restored to his father's favor and confidence, but he had squandered much of his God-given powers and opportunities beyond the hope of recovery. He was poorer in every way for his painful experience. The elder son was richer in every way because of his loyalty and service to his father. Sin is always a prodigal. It wastes and dissipates material and spiritual "goods" with lavish prodigality. The younger son never again could enjoy to the full the possession of his once undiminished powers because he had squandered them. The elder son had always been with his father and all his father's possessions were his for legitimate use and enjoyment. The one important fact to remember is that both sons were raised in the father's house through a process of Christian growth and education and that both had the opportunity of enjoying a father's continual presence and abiding love and care without the necessity of being first brought into the blessed estate of sonship by a radical change through conversion. One only needed such a radical change because of voluntary disobedience. Both were sons through Christian growth and training and might have remained such to the end of life.

And is it not pathetic to think that some prefer a state of rebellion and alienation to one of sonship and filial loyalty? The

church deserves the greatest praise for its unselfish efforts to redeem the prodigals of the world and restore them to their rightful places in God's spiritual household. But are we sure we are putting forth our best efforts to bring up our children in such a manner that they may be spared the necessity of a prodigal's experience? To save a prodigal is noble. To keep a son from becoming a prodigal is nobler. Dr. Anthony in his "Children's Covenant" puts this thought admirably thus: "We ought to do all we can for all sorts of sinners, but we ought to do more than we ever thought of doing for the children, 'whose angels do always behold the face of our Father in heaven.' To go after hardened sinners to the neglect of children is the worst possible policy. The drum, the tambourine, the flag, the march on the street, the song and testimony, have done great good. When we shall enlist a like zeal in saving the children we shall do a much greater good."

#### **4. The Case of Timothy as a Product of Christian Culture.**

Timothy is a striking illustration of the possibilities of careful home training for discipleship and for service. In many of the cases of New Testament conversion which might be profitably considered, the motives and influences at work are usually indicated and the manner of the spirit's operation is usually suggested. But in the case of Timothy we are introduced to one, not as an opposer of Jesus nor as an indifferent spectator, nor as an inquirer after truth and the way of life, but as a Christian with opinions more or less clear and with convictions more or less pronounced. He had evidently reached his position through a process of gradual growth and development under the influences of wise and loving home training.

Timothy was born at Lystra or possibly at Derbe. His mother was named Eunice and his grandmother Lois. His father was a Greek. He was early instructed in the sacred writings of his mother's religion, she having been a daughter of Israel. A beautiful tribute is given to pious home training by Paul in his letter to Timothy: "But abide thou in the things which thou

hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that *from a babe* thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 3:15. And again: "Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice and I am persuaded in thee also." II Timothy 1:5. These passages and others like them give us a picture of a home in which God was magnified and honored; in which the Scriptures were given first place in religious culture and in which the interests of the inner life were exalted above the interests of the outer life. Reverence for holiness, belief in prayer and love for God's word were inculcated from childhood up. Paul, in writing to Timothy, calls him: "My true child in the faith." And in writing the Corinthians he uses these words concerning his faithful and influential coworker in the Gospel: "My beloved and faithful child in the Lord." It is universally held that this whole family received the glad tidings with "unfeigned faith" on the occasion of Paul's first visit to Lystra and Derbe, and that the young Timothy thus became in reality Paul's "true child in the faith." Timothy is evidently a product of careful Christian home training and of intelligent acceptance of God's gracious influences without any negative period of waywardness or any striking radical change in conversion. He was familiar with the Scriptures from his youth up. He was open and receptive and gladly and cheerfully came into the full consciousness of his spiritual life by voluntarily accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and friend. And with more mothers and grandmothers like Eunice and Lois and with more careful and loving home training in moral and spiritual things, such as Timothy received, there would be still larger numbers to come into the kingdom by the gradual but no less effective process of Salvation through Christian culture and Christian education.

In this connection, Dr. Noble, in his "New Testament Conversions," has these appropriate remarks to offer: "It is both in accordance with the facts and philosophy of faith and in line with the evident purpose of God, that children in Christian homes

should be so trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord that when the time comes for confessing Christ before the world there shall be no central truths to be learned and no gross sins to be thrown off, but only a simple, easy, forward step along the path on which they have already been moving, into the open fellowship of all who love the Son of God and are trying to do His will in the world. It is because Timothy came into discipleship in this way that his example is so full of meaning. There are homes in these modern times which are doing the same work in the same beautiful spirit, which was done in that ancient home by Lois and Eunice. And when there are more of these homes, then there will be more members in all of our churches, who shall have come into the faith as blossoms come in fulness of beauty, under the genial breath of the spring, or fruit comes to the vine under the ripening warmth of summer."

## II. The Testimony of Experience for Salvation through Christian Culture.

Not only are there abundant Scriptural warrants for belief in the doctrine of conversion through gradual growth and development but the testimony of youthful Christian experience is unmistakable along the same lines. Prof. Starbuck in his "Psychology of Religion" has gathered together a vast amount of valuable material bearing on this subject. He sent out letters of inquiry to men and women of all nationalities and of practically all types of religious belief, asking specific questions concerning their religious beliefs and experiences during childhood and youth. Two hundred and thirty-seven responded. Among this number were representatives of the following religious bodies: Methodists, Friends, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, German Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Moravian, Catholic, Unitarian, Universalist and others.

The list is certainly representative. Many of the respondents were students in American institutions of learning. The age of the persons replying varied from sixteen to forty years and over.

These replies clearly proved, if further proof than individual experience were necessary, that the careful training of children in childhood and youth do have an important bearing upon the type of religion experienced later in life. Most of the respondents report careful religious teaching at home and in Sunday School during the period of childhood and youth, with considerable regularity of habit in attending church services, prayer meetings, family prayers and other like religious observances. One of the impressive facts brought out in these representative replies is that religious feelings develop very early in the conscious life of the child and that the earlier types of religious feeling are extremely simple and realistic. The idea of God is usually vivid but rather crude in form. God is regarded as having human form but of larger size and hovering above the clouds or seated in an imaginable heaven, always ready and willing to answer the most trivial requests in prayer. He is pictured very distinctly as a personal God. The sense of right and wrong also develops early and is one of the most potent facts in childhood religion. In fact, the child-conscience is very sensitive and indicates a lively moral activity on the part of the growing religious consciousness. Among the facts brought out very clearly in these numerous replies are: (1) The reality and vividness of the religious life of the child; (2) The importance and value of early Christian training; (3) The possibility of religious growth and development on the part of the growing child without any marked crisis or transition and without any noticeable element of strain and conflict.

### **1. The Reality and Vividness of the Child's Religious Life.**

The child's religious life is real and vivid. His imagination is most active, and hence his religious conceptions are extremely vivid and distinct. Such expressions occur frequently in the replies: "I told God many things I would not tell my parents." "I loved Jesus with all the fervor of a child's heart." "The sense that God was watching over me frightened me in the night. I prayed, and repeated, 'I am Jesus' little lamb,' and felt secure."

"I remember a sense of duty influencing my childhood before I was four years old." Another one wrote relative to the time when religious feelings first develop: "I do not remember the time when I wasn't vitally concerned in religion. I think religion began with my birth." One writes thus: "I could not sleep until I had said my evening prayers." And still another one wrote concerning a sensitive conscience: "When seven I stole some cookies. I worried over it for three days. I confessed to God and wept and prayed, but felt that something more was necessary. Finally I confessed to mother and was forgiven." In this connection it might be in place to refer to John Fiske's youthful conception of God as a big man sitting on a little platform up in the sky with an open book before him in which he recorded the good and evil acts of all his people. For his youthful mind God kept a faithful record of everything said and done. This was to be used in the day of judgment. Who will say that the normal child is not intensely religious? And who will want to despise the simplicity and reality and intensity of the child's religious life? To the child it means infinitely much.

## 2. The Importance of Early Religious Training.

The supreme importance of early religious training and surroundings is impressively taught by a large number of these replies. The child Samuel was dedicated to God by his pious mother before he was born, and early brought to the service of the temple. Need we wonder that the Lord called him early and that the old prophet Eli perceived at last that the Lord had indeed called the child? The early religious training of the young Timothy by his saintly mother and grandmother made his religious life one of normal growth and development with the steady growth and development of his other unfolding powers. One person writes: "Mother taught me to pray at her knee and I always had a whispered prayer that none but God could understand. When I did anything wrong, mother required me to seek forgiveness. *The change from careless, indifferent childhood to earnest, warm interest in God's work was very gradual and very natural, after*

the good training I received." One young man writes thus: "Mother was patient and gentle with me. I had church and Sunday School associations of the pleasantest kind. I was not taught anything about hell and satan. I have not changed my childhood phrase, Our Father in Heaven, except to widen the term." And still another one writes of his beautiful home influences: "I had God-fearing parents and was surrounded by all the influences which go to make Godly character. *From infancy I was taught to believe that I belonged to the Saviour* and that He loved me. My delight in Christian thought has changed with the passing years only to become intensified." Who can estimate the value of such surroundings to the development of a normal Christian character? Prof. Starbuck says: "It often happens that the religion of a child is an atmosphere which it breathes, so wholesome and so enlivening, that he takes it up and works it over into his very being." And this sort of religious life is the most vital and the most desirable because so all-pervading and genuine.

The reason that some children of Christian families and with Christian training do not develop normally and healthily is due to the fact of foolish and unwise religious teaching. Thus a sensitive nature in youth was unduly disturbed and made extremely unhappy by the following incident: "A Sunday School teacher tried to impress my unworthiness and sin upon me and told me that I would be lost forever if I was not converted. For three years I waited in misery of mind for the expected conversion. Fortunately a dear friend explained that unless I had done something very wrong or had some heathen beliefs to cast aside, all I needed was to make a public avowal of my faith and purpose. I was tremendously relieved and joined the church in a month." An unpardonable mental anguish was caused in this sensitive soul by the foolish and one-sided conceptions of the religious life on the part of the Sunday School teacher, which was presented to this delicate young soul. An abnormal and unnatural experience was prescribed for this young child of faith, and when it refused to come it brought unhappiness and misery and even despair. Another one had this unhappy experience: "My parents



and teachers impressed upon me that I must believe all or nothing. It did not take me long to decide which." This insistence on the unqualified acceptance of articles of belief led to unbelief. Still another one was made very unhappy by extreme strictness in the observance of the Sabbath. He writes after this fashion: "On Sundays we could not whittle, nor go faster than a walk, nor go down to the river, nor laugh or play in any way. No one who has not passed through it can imagine how I felt as Saturday night drew on. In addition to the torture of church and Sunday School we were obliged to commit to memory whole psalms, chapters of the Bible and hymns; and the thing I worst of all detested was the reading of certain so-called religious books." Such unwise and unlovely treatment of childhood is almost as bad, or possibly even worse, than absolute neglect in the matter of religious training. It invariably leads to revolt and hatred of all things religious and not infrequently blights the growing religious consciousness of the child for life, as in the case of Robert Ingersoll.

### **3. The Possibility of a Gradual Growth into the Fulness of the Religious Life without a Radical Change in Conversion.**

The possibility of a gradual growth and development from childhood religion to maturity of faith in adults has been impressively demonstrated by some of the testimony given in the previous paragraphs. The child's religious life may and frequently does dawn at a very early age. Under proper environments and with wise direction such spiritual activities may grow and develop without any abrupt or sudden change into the clearer and more thoughtful form of the mature Christian's faith. That there are periods of intensified religious activity, and not unfrequently times of doubt and uncertainty and seasons of unrest and strain in the religious development of a considerable number of earnest natures, cannot be doubted. There are sometimes assignable reasons for such uneven and spasmodic religious development due to temperament, unwise religious teaching or extremes of religious surroundings. As in the natural world, so in the spiritual

world, there are sometimes seasons of more rapid growth and expansion. But that does not alter the fact that many evenly balanced natures pass, by slow and almost imperceptible changes, from the simple, childlike faith of childhood to the intelligent and reasoned faith of maturer years. One correspondent of Prof. Starbuck's puts this thought in this way: "As I grew older, and read more and was guided and strengthened by parents and teachers, I gradually came to understand what Christianity means and to trust it. I had religious convictions from childhood. Their influence on me grew as my love and Christian surroundings grew, and gradually shaped my spiritual life." And another one writes thus: "Always since my early years I have felt myself a child of God. *My growth has been even from childhood.*"

The harmonious development of the religious life of the gradual-growth type, in which a high degree of spiritual perfection is attained as naturally and easily as a plant unfolds, is beautifully illustrated in the case of Dr. Edward Everett Hale. His strength and symmetry of character need no emphasis at the hands of any one. He writes concerning his own spiritual experience as follows: "I observe with profound regret the religious struggles which come into many biographies as if almost essential to the formation of a hero. I ought to speak of these, to say that any man has an advantage not to be estimated, who is born, as I was, into a family where the religion is simple and rational; who is trained in the theory of such a religion so that he never knows, for an hour, what these religious or irreligious struggles are. I always knew God loved me, and I was always grateful to Him for the world He placed me in. I always liked to tell Him so, and was always glad to receive His suggestions to me." This is sane Christian living. This is a beautiful example of salvation by Christian culture.

And that many children are thus brought into the kingdom is abundantly proved by statistics. It is said that not one in ten members of the Moravian communion can fix on any precise point of time when he became a Christian. Of thirty-four candidates for the ministry of the English Wesleyan church who were recently called upon to relate their religious experience, considerably

less than half could mention any definite time or place of conversion, while many distinctly testified that their religious life had been a gradual growth from childhood. Probably the large majority of members in the non-revival churches, especially in German countries and in German-speaking churches, have never known any special time of crisis in their spiritual lives and can point to no special place or time of any radical change and yet they know themselves to be members of Christ's spiritual kingdom by the witness of the spirit which he has given them in a life of simple faith and childlike trust in their heavenly Father. And some of the sweetest and rarest Christians whom it has ever been my lot to know came into the church in this way. What a tender thought to think that the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit may be present in the unfolding processes of the child's moral nature from the first glimpses of consciousness and be continued through all the changing scenes of life to its closing hour. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," were the comforting words of the risen Saviour.

What a blessed assurance this is for large numbers of earnest disciples of the Master, who have no consciousness of any sudden or radical change in their Christian development, but who know themselves nevertheless here and now as belonging to the Lord, that their quiet uneventful life of simple faith and trust in God, from childhood up, is just as pleasing and acceptable to God as those of a more radical experience. There are thousands who know of no strain in their lives, who have no remembrance of any continued state of disobedience, who always sought to do the right, as they understood it, and who always gladly accepted new duties and new responsibilities with increased light, and who thus simply grew gradually but surely and unmistakably into the full stature of their Christian manhood.

### III. The View of the Best Modern Religious Teachers.

The view of conversion as a process of gradual growth and development along the lines of the child's normal religious activities best meets the requirements of modern religious education and

modern religious thought. It opens the way for the wisest methods of Christian culture and education by laying great stress upon the necessity of proper religious training for the growing Christian child. Assuming on the one hand the existence in the child of an innate religious nature, implanted at birth as part of his spiritual inheritance, and, on the other hand, the continual presence and activity of the divine spirit in the growth and development of the child's spiritual nature through wise and sympathetic Christian training, this view of the child's salvation lays due stress upon the supreme value of proper religious influences in the family, in the school, in the church and in the child's social surroundings as "saving agencies," to keep the child in the paths of uprightness and virtue by helping him to become established in good moral habits and in strong, positive Christian principles, and thus save him from the necessity of a radical moral change in conversion.

That large portions of the Christian church should have been somewhat slow to accept this view of the child's spiritual development is perhaps natural and easily explained. The aggressive campaign against the corruption and moral filth of the Roman Empire by the Apostolic church made it necessary to use the terms of conversion which imply a radical transformation of life and character. Surely the Roman Empire needed a "new birth" in the most radical sense of the term. The surrounding nations needed a complete moral transformation no less urgently. The language of Scripture specially intended for the conversion of the adult members of non-Christian peoples to Christianity thus came to be used by the church for all classes and conditions of people indiscriminately. Elementary catechisms were prepared and systems of Christian thought developed which laid great stress upon the necessity of a radical moral transformation for membership in the brotherhood of Christian believers. The terms thus used and the view of conversion thus advocated, so necessary and so appropriate under the conditions as they then existed, gradually came to be applied indiscriminately to the spiritual requirements of all classes and conditions of people. There was no effort made to any extent to distinguish between the spiritual conditions of

the heathen or the non-Christian population and the carefully trained children in Christian families. All were under the equal necessity of a moral regeneration and only one type of experience was considered acceptable. There was supposed to be only one process of salvation, and that was the process of the "new birth," and the hardened sinner and the tender child alike were expected to conform to this prescribed method. However carefully children might be trained in religious matters and however gracious they might appear in disposition or lovable in Christian traits, they were nevertheless usually regarded by the Christian church as incapable of any good moral acts or of being pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God until they were converted and had passed through the transforming experiences of the "new birth." This altogether too widely accepted view of the child's spiritual requirements regarded his normal condition as one of waywardness and alienation from God, imposed arbitrary and abnormal conditions for his spiritual growth and development, ignored the inherent impulses and aspirations of the child to faith and trustfulness in God, so clearly taught by Scripture and experience, and therefore frequently wrought untold moral suffering and confusion for sensitive and serious-minded children and parents as well. This has been particularly true in those Protestant denominations which have always emphasized strongly the revival or emotional type of conversion as necessary for entrance to the Christian life.

### **1. Horace Bushnell on "Christian Culture."**

Horace Bushnell was the first modern Christian preacher and educator of any prominence who recognized the natural and inherent religiousness of the average Christian child and who sought to uphold the proposition that children could be trained and educated in the spirit and teachings of the Christian religion without knowing any negative period of conscious waywardness and sinfulness. In his epoch-making volume on "Christian Culture" he contended "that the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise." This proposition embodied

what he considered the true idea of Christian education. Says Bushnell: "The aim, effort and expectation should be not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seemingly rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years." This surely seems a reasonable proposition; and to us who were taught to know and love the Lord from childhood up there is nothing new or disturbing in it. And yet Dr. Bushnell was harshly and even bitterly criticised for the views set forth in his book because many good Christian people thought his contention made altogether too little of the terrible fact of the child's sinful and depraved nature and, therefore, underestimated the supreme importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the transforming processes of the "new birth." The possibility of gradual growth and development in the child's spiritual life seemed to many earnest people dangerous because this would make the process of salvation too natural and human and rob it of its supernatural significance. Conversion, as viewed by many people, is a supernatural interposition on the part of God's spirit for the regeneration of the spiritual nature in the "new birth," and therefore just as necessary for children as for adult members of the Christian community. The contention that for children of Christian parents and with Christian training there could be salvation through the slower and less striking processes of growth and development, seemed to many in the days of Dr. Bushnell, as it does to many people in our own day, to minimize the importance of God's intervention in the redemption of sin and to magnify, on the other hand, the importance of Christian training in the salvation and spiritual redemption of children.

But Dr. Bushnell was careful not to ignore the terrible fact of sin nor the absolute necessity of God's spirit in the Christian training of children. He was fully aware of the inherent evil in children. He recognized the presence in them of many sinful and conflicting impulses and tendencies. Whether these are to be regarded as original sin or as inherited tendencies to sin is

immaterial for the views under consideration. Dr. Bushnell gave full recognition to the inherent tendencies to waywardness and depravity in children, but he also recognized, as very few Christian educators had done before him, the strong, inherent impulses to goodness and generosity in the normal child. He was fully aware of the fact that the child is not all good and not all evil; that the child has many tendencies to evil and also many impulses to good, but that in the normal child of Christian parents the noble and worthy impulses predominate. Dr. Bushnell was one of the first modern Christian teachers and educators to seize upon the important fact that the normal child has a religious nature, as he has an intellectual and a social nature. This is a part of his natural birthright. It is God-given, as his other faculties are God-given. His religious nature grows and develops through proper training and culture, as his other faculties grow and develop through training and education. The operation of the Holy Spirit, in this process of growth and development of the child's spiritual nature, is assumed as just as necessary and just as indispensable as it is in the process of the "new birth" through supernatural interposition. And is it any less wonderful or any less divine that the Holy Spirit should direct and guide the growing activities of the child's spiritual nature to high and holy uses through careful Christian training than that it should be able to transform a confirmed sinner to a child of God by a sudden act of conversion? According to the contentions of Bushnell the presence and power of the Holy Spirit were assumed as absolutely indispensable in the proper training and development of the child's spiritual nature. But with the assistance and coöperation of the Holy Spirit in the careful training of the child's religious nature through Christian culture it was claimed that the inherent tendencies to waywardness and sin on the part of the child could be overcome and that the child could be so trained that it would "grow up a Christian and never know himself as having been otherwise."

This is surely not an unreasonable proposition. Nor does it ignore the supreme importance of God's part in the operation, or the terrible fact of sin and depravity in the child. It simply

magnifies the presence and power of God's spirit to the glory of His name and the redemption of souls. However depraved and sinful the child's tendencies and impulses may be, the vivifying and energizing power of God's Holy Spirit in the careful training of the youthful mind is abundantly able to overcome the inherent evil tendencies and to "renew" and "transform" the child's moral nature through the slow but no less wonderful and mysterious processes of gradual growth and development so that he will need no "new birth" by sudden transformation in later years. We are dealing with spiritual things. We are just beginning to recognize the significance of the child's spiritual nature in its beautiful exhibitions of Christian traits. The child's spiritual nature, whether a part of its original birthright or imparted to it by the Holy Spirit, is capable of responding to the moulding influences of the Spirit at a very early age. And why should it not be the normal way, to have the child develop and grow into spiritual manhood under the Spirit's guidance rather than be abandoned by the Spirit to the world and the devil until the day of its redemption in sudden conversion? As Prof. Coe says in his "Education in Religion and Morals": "Many children of Christian parents do, as a matter of fact, reach Christian manhood in this way; taught from the start to count themselves children of God, from stage to stage of their growth they exercise a faith that is proportional to their powers. These represent the normal development of a child under Christian influences. The fact that many children who are brought up in Christian homes go away from God does not indicate that Jesus was in error in his view of the child and his development."

## 2. Dr. Hibbard on "The Religion of Childhood."

Another modern writer on religious education, who has strongly advocated the same views of Christian development through training and culture, is Dr. J. G. Hibbard. He was a Methodist minister and educator and, in his book on "The Religion of Childhood," pointed out that the doctrine of Scripture with reference to children was that they were in a state of regeneration. This



state, he claimed, consisted not merely in the remission of the penalty due to original sin but to a positive gift actually imparted by the Divine Spirit and constituting the "new life." This gift, Hibbard maintained, every child retains until by his own evil choice he suffers a personal fall from grace. Such a fall is not necessary, and the aim of Christian nurture should be to prevent the choice for the evil life and to develop the germinal life planted in the soul at the beginning. The old view in the Methodist church was that a man could not be religious until he was converted from Satan to God through a radical change of heart. Hibbard taught that one could not be irreligious until he had been "converted from God to Satan" by a deliberate act of the will. He supported his contention by referring to the teaching of his own church relative to universal infant regeneration and to the generally accepted belief that all persons who die in infancy are saved. But, says Hibbard: "If dying infants are saved, it must be through divine grace. But why should such grace be given to those who die but withheld from those who need it for living." This was the central thought of his entire book. If divine grace is vouchsafed to dying infants why should it be denied to the living? And hence his contention that all children are in a state of regeneration through the grace of God. The proper training of children, therefore, consists in developing and strengthening the germinal principles of the spiritual life implanted in the soul at the beginning, that the growing child may have its character formed on the positive side by the establishing of right principles and right conduct and practically never know a protracted negative period of wilfulness and sin.

And this view, so well expressed by a Methodist leader of religious thought on the religion of childhood, is becoming widely accepted in all the Christian denominations of the revival type of church activity. Even the conservative Presbyterian church, by a practically unanimous expression of opinion on the part of the ministers and laymen alike, not long since struck out the article on "Infant Damnation" for unbaptized children from the pages of its revised prayer book, as alike offensive to Christian ethics and opposed to biblical teaching. In fact, there is scarcely a Protestant

denomination anywhere who would still hold strictly to the view of the unregenerate condition of unbaptized infants, as formerly taught so widely by Catholic and Protestant bodies alike. With the passing away in our Protestant churches of the view of the unregenerate state of the child's moral condition, there has come to be accepted in its place the more rational and more Christian view, so ably advanced by such religious leaders and educators as Horace Bushnell and Dr. J. G. Hibbard. With the more generally accepted view that a kind, merciful heavenly Father would surely not withhold His grace from living children if it would save unbaptized dying children from eternal loss and abandonment, there goes the other view just as widely accepted in practically all the Protestant religious bodies of the world that children of Christian parents should be expected to grow up in a state of grace and practically always remain in a state of grace through life without knowing any prolonged negative period of sin.

### **3. Coe on "Salvation through Education."**

Perhaps the most widely known writer on religious education in our country at the present time is Prof. Geo. A. Coe of the Northwestern University, from whose books "The Spiritual Life" and the "Religion of a Mature Mind" I have had frequent occasion to quote in this pamphlet. Prof. Coe's latest book is on the subject, "Education in Religion and Morals." It is a significant fact that Prof. Coe is professor in one of the most influential Methodist institutions of learning in this country and evidently the harbinger of a new and better day for religious training in the Methodist church. This church has been perhaps the most insistent and most emphatic of all the great Protestant denominations in the country, in claiming that a radical process of conversion is necessary for salvation and that children, however carefully trained from childhood up in religious matters, cannot be regarded as in a state of regeneration until they have had some kind of radical transformation of the spiritual life in conversion. Prof. Coe does not underestimate the importance of the "new birth" for confirmed sinners, but he advocates a process of careful religious

training for the child of religious parents so that there may be a gradual unfolding of the child's religious nature from within by normal processes of growth and development, rather than a sudden, radical transformation of the child's moral nature from without, through sudden conversion, after a period of moral neglect and disorder. In a chapter on "Salvation by Education" he points out the important fact, already referred to in this treatise, that the Christian life is to be regarded as an "incarnation," a realization of the divine purpose and plan in our every day spiritual activities. The Divine Spirit is to be regarded as being present in all the normal processes of the soul's activities. This is the same view which Prof. Bowne, also a professor in a large Methodist university, advances, when he says that "the sense of a divine presence in our lives is not dying out but it is taking on a new form in accordance with a more careful psychology and a greater precision of thought. Along with this has come the insight that *it is preëminently in the conscience, the pure heart, the surrendered will, the holy activities, that God makes His abode with us.*" The view advanced in the chapter on "Salvation by Education" is that the child is to grow up a Christian in a positive sense and "that the life of every child is a life in God and that development of the mind should be growth in the God-consciousness." With Coe education is to be regarded as self-expression. He says: "When education is taken in the profound sense of bringing to expression that which is deepest and most real in man, then it becomes a means of making him conscious of the God in whom he lives and moves and has his being. Such training can begin with infancy and it can continue to old age. It can and does bring men to the obedient recognition of God as the supreme reality and of Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is salvation by education." With this broader and more comprehensive view of Christian education we would probably all agree.

#### 4. Other Noted Religious Educators on Christian Culture.

In England, both among Anglicans and among Nonconformists, and in the United States among all classes of religious leaders and

educators, the best educational and religious thought is along similar lines. Thus Rev. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple, London, successor to Joseph Parker, writes: "I believe that many thousand children grow up within the kingdom without being consciously alienated from God. *Their spiritual history is a development rather than a revolution.*" Rev. John Watson, D. D., the author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," writes: "I believe that a child may be born into the Kingdom of God when it is born into the world and grow up within God's family, as did Jeremiah and John the Baptist. I also hold that the conscious crisis called conversion is not necessary to regeneration, for the opposite would mean that every one had to go astray and be brought back to God at a distinct point in his life, which is not the case." Dr. De Garmo, formerly president of Swarthmore College and now professor at Cornell writes as an educator and also as a member of the Society of Friends: "In the earlier years of religious instruction it ought to be assumed that every child is a child of God; that by virtue of this fact he belongs in the Christian family. Children ought not to be allowed to drift on and on with the general assumption that they are lost, and the vague hope that sometime they will be redeemed; but direct conscious effort should be made to initiate them into a distinctively religious life." H. Clay Trumbull, of the "Sunday School Times" and for many years one of the foremost Sunday-school leaders in the country, writes about mistaken conceptions of the child's religious life as follows: "Members of many a Sunday-school class, who might be desirous of being received into full church membership would be inquired of, not so much on the point whether they *now* love and trust the Lord Jesus, as on the point *when* they were converted; not so much concerning the evidence which their present course furnishes of their fidelity to their Divine Master, as concerning the evidence they can supply that their conversion was a sound and a thorough one. *In this way many young disciples are taught to look within at themselves, rather than outward and upward at their Saviour.*"

Bishop Neely of the Methodist church, in an introduction to a book on "The Child's Religious Life," being "A Study of the

Child's Religious Nature and the Best Methods for its Training and Development," by Rev. W. G. Koons, A. M., makes these pertinent remarks on the subject: "The best period for religious work is childhood. Then the parent, the teacher, the preacher and the church may do the best work, do it most easily and secure the best and most permanent results. *Very often the religious life of the little child is superior to the religious life of many adults, because it is simpler and sweeter.*" It is the view of practically all wise and rational religious teachers and educators of our time, to regard the religious life of the child as a continuous one, which has its roots in its inborn religious nature and which is to be trained and developed as all the other sides of the child's conscious mental life. It is the great problem of modern religious educators and teachers to train the child's nature as a whole, not only on its intellectual and physical side, but also on its moral and spiritual side, through a careful process of cultivation which begins with childhood and which must continue until the child's intellectual and moral character is pretty well formed and right habits of thinking and right states of will pretty well established. The growing nature of the child is a unity, endowed with infinite capacities and possibilities which are to be developed by careful sympathetic training on the part of parents, teachers and religious leaders, so that the child's spiritual life, like his intellectual and his physical life, is to unfold and develop normally and by gradual processes from within, in accordance with the laws of its own spiritual nature, and not by spasmodic and super-normal influences from without, through radical conversion. And there is no greater educational problem before the teachers and educators of the country to-day than the one of Christian education. All true education must be religious education. The intellectual training in our public schools should be carried on continually with the thought in the background of the child's moral and religious needs and capacities. All true education should bring the child face to face with the thought of God as embodied in the facts and truths taught in every branch of human knowledge, and with the truth of human responsibility to God as revealed in the human conscience and in the revealed Word of God. It is

the urgent duty of all true instructors of the young—the parent, the teacher and the religious leader—to assist the growing child in the formation of his Christian life and character so that he may grow gradually, but none the less strongly and positively, into the full possession of his spiritual inheritance through a vital faith in the ever-present and ever-living God, the Father and Maker of us all.

#### IV. The Spiritual Life as a Personal Relationship of the Soul to its Heavenly Father.

The spiritual life is represented under a large variety of figures of speech in the Bible. It is conceived of as a close, inner union between the soul and its Maker in the figure of the vine and the branches. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. Or it is represented as a structure, whose "foundation" and "corner-stone" is Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11. And again the Christian life is spoken of under the figure of an indwelling spirit in a physical temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" I Corinthians 3:16. Or the figure of the growing plant, with its need of good soil, of proper nourishment and freedom from choking weeds, is taken to express the fundamental thought of the Christian life. The life-principle of the plant is in the germ of the seed which simply germinates and grows under proper conditions and brings forth fruit. And again, the spiritual kingdom is compared to an invisible life-principle, implanted into the soul and permeating its entire conscious activities, under the figure of "leaven" which is "hid in three measures of meal" and which eventually leavens the whole lump. And for none of these representations of the spiritual life is a supernatural process of a "new birth" required to carry out the thought consistently and harmoniously, but they may all be made applicable to the normal, gradual

processes of the child's unfolding spiritual life. To be sure, a spiritual agency is assumed in all these conceptions of the Christian life, but it is the agency which works in accordance with established spiritual laws and which may be continually operative in the normal processes of the child's religious growth and development. The close, intimate relationship between the soul and God as represented under the figure of the vine and the branches is not only possible, but desirable and practicable, from the tenderest age of childhood through the entire stretch of the Christian's life here upon earth. The pure and uncontaminated body of the young Christian child may be just as fitting and worthy a temple of the Holy Ghost as the full grown body of the mature man, too often rendered impure and unclean by the contamination of sin. If Jesus Christ is to be the "foundation" and cornerstone" of our Christian characters, then surely the impressionable age of childhood and youth is the most appropriate time for the right spiritual foundation to be laid. Or if the Christian spirit is to be represented by the hidden and mysterious principle of the "leaven" in the dough, or of the "germ" in the seed, to be developed and to grow under favorable conditions and with proper surroundings, then most assuredly the tender age of childhood and youth is the most favorable time for these gracious and life-giving forces to begin their processes of growth and development. There must be a beginning of all these spiritual activities of Christian growth and of character-formation, but they may be laid early in life or implanted at birth. And a divine agency must be assumed as the origin of all these gracious spiritual activities, but there is nothing in the nature of the child's soul or in the teaching of Sacred Scripture to prevent us from conceiving of this divine agency as operative continuously and uninterruptedly, in all the various processes and stages of the child's spiritual development, for the perfecting of its Christian life and character. As Prof. Bowne says: "*We must discern the divine presence and agency in life as a whole, and work with Him along the natural lines which He has established, in the full faith that thus we are co-workers with God and that results thus reached are as divine as they would be if reached by some miraculous fiat.*"

## 1. As Illustrated by Mature Christians.

But perhaps the most beautiful and most expressive representation of the nature of the Christian life is that of a *personal relationship of the soul to Christ*. This is expressed in such thoughts as "following" the Master and becoming a personal disciple of His. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16: 24. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be." John 12: 26. Or it is expressed in the language of sonship in the father's household, with all that this implies of obedience and trust, of service and loyalty, of supreme love and affection. God is not only the Creator and Preserver of the universe, but He is our kind and merciful "Heavenly Father." Thus Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." Jesus referred repeatedly to God as His heavenly Father: "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15: 8. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John 18: 11. This assumes complete submission to the Father's will. "I ascend to my Father and to your Father and to my God and to your God." John 20: 17. "I and my Father are one." John 10: 30. Jesus told his disciples with reference to prayer that they should not make vain repetitions as the heathen do: "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Matthew 6: 8. The disciples are told to be forgiving: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Matthew 6: 14. The Father will hear prayer in secret and reward openly: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6: 6. And again, Jesus says: "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful." Luke 6: 36. And again: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12: 32. A right attitude towards enemies is made a condition of sonship. Jesus says in Matthew



5:44, 45: "But I say, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, *that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.*" God is our Father and as such, He is loving, kind, merciful, forgiving, ready to answer prayer, not desiring that any should perish but of infinite love and compassion. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Psalm 103:13.

And if God is our Father, then we are his children and stand in the same relation to Him spiritually as earthly children to their natural parents. Thus Paul says: "Ye are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:6. And again Paul writes: "Then shall they be called children of the living God." Romans 9:26. Jesus tells his disciples to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them, that ye may be called "the children of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:45. Paul writes thus: "The spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Romans 8:16, 17. Or we shall be called the "sons" of God. "Beloved, what manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." I John 3:1, 2. "Ye are the sons of the living God." Hosea 1:10. As sons we are created in the Father's image and partake of the Father's spiritual nature. We enjoy all the privileges which this relationship implies. We are in His continual presence and enjoy His companionship. We have an honored place at His table. We are fed by His bounty. We have communion with Him. We are also His heirs, "sons of God, joint heirs with Christ." But by virtue of our sonship, we also owe to the Father allegiance and loving obedience and faithful service. We are to work in His vineyard. We are to follow Jesus as our Elder Brother in his mission of love and mercy, now to the mountain top of vision, now to the lowly place where sin and suffering reign, now to the judgment hall and perhaps to the garden and the cross. We

are to love our Father with all our hearts and with all our souls. We are to give Him the supreme allegiance of our hearts and the undivided loyalty and affection of our lives.

## **2. As Illustrated by the Growing Child.**

This conception of the spiritual life as a personal relationship of the soul to God in Jesus Christ, involving all the elements of personal friendship and companionship, is peculiarly applicable to the views of salvation through Christian culture which have been under consideration. And it is a conception which the child can readily understand and which will grow in breadth and reality with the growth and development of the child's personality into maturity. The child knows what earthly parents are and what they have done for him and what they mean to him. He knows what it means to love and to trust his parents and in turn to be loved and trusted by them. He knows that he ought to be good and loving and obedient, and that any failure on his part will cause his father pain and displeasure. He loves to please his father and to be regarded with favor and good will. The strongest motives for the normal child are fear of a father's displeasure and punishment, and desire for a father's approval and commendation. As the years go by fear is displaced more and more by a commanding love to do the father's will and to enjoy his continued favor. The dutiful son recognizes that all his earthly blessings and comforts come from a father's unbounded love and thoughtfulness. And he does not hesitate to come to his father with the greatest degree of freedom and assurance for comfort and consolation in times of trouble, for sympathy and fellowship in moments of joy and pleasure, for unlimited favors through childish requests in things that are wanted and needed. A father's ability to grant favors and dispense blessings is only exceeded by his ready willingness to satisfy the multiplied needs of the growing child to the fullest extent. This freedom of access and unbounded confidence and trust in a father's unlimited capacity as a dispenser of all kinds of blessings, is characteristic of the simple faith of childlike trust. Deep down in the child's

innermost heart, and underlying his entire mental attitude toward his father is the full consciousness that he has free and unrestricted access to his father and that he owes his father the best service of his young life.

This relationship to his earthly father—and I use the word father for the parental relationship—helps the child to understand his relationship to his heavenly Father. By a simple and easy process of thought he can be made to carry the conception of his earthly relationship to his father over to the spiritual realm. He has an earthly father and he has a heavenly Father. What the earthly father is to his youthful mind in all the qualities that make the thought of father precious and sacred, that the thought of a kind, loving and merciful heavenly Father is to his childish imagination, only with infinitely greater powers and possibilities. It is really touching to see with what simplicity and guilelessness the young mind will grasp the idea of a God, as Father, with strength and wisdom and power and love and kindly affection, unlimited and unbounded. The trustful child will flee as readily into the loving arms of his heavenly Father as he will into the arms of his earthly father. He may be taught to love his Saviour with all the vividness and intensity of his young soul. It is easy for him to tell God all his troubles and childish disappointments, to confess all his sins and wrongdoings and seek forgiveness, to ask freely for all his real and imaginary needs and desires, and to feel buoyantly happy in his Father's goodwill and approval as revealed in a good conscience. A mingled feeling of fear of God's displeasure and punishment and of desire for his approval and goodwill are powerful motives to the childish mind. In later years fear is displaced more and more by an overpowering love to do the Father's good pleasure, not through fear of punishment, but because of a commanding desire to do the will of God and enjoy His gracious favor in the sweet consciousness of an approving conscience. How precious is such simple faith and childlike trust on the part of the Christian child in the goodness, mercy and loving kindness of our common heavenly Father. He is ever watchful, ready to hear and answer prayers, always gentle, loving and kind, unlimited in resources

and unfailing in His promises. It is refreshing to hear the secret thoughts and unfeigned faith of some of Jesus' "little ones," who pour out their hearts to Him in the greatest simplicity and trustfulness, never doubting, never fearing. Thus children are taught to sing :

Jesus was once a little child,  
A little child like me;  
Was cradled in His mother's arms,  
And sat upon her knee.

Once He was just the age I am,  
And was as helpless, too;  
He used to sleep and walk and speak  
Just as little children do.

And why was it He chose to be  
A child so poor and weak?  
It was that I might learn from Him  
How blessed are the meek;

It was that I might learn from Him  
My parents to obey,  
And, like the Child of Nazareth,  
Grow holier every day.

The young child, at a comparatively early age, may be taught to understand some of the simpler truths of this divine relationship. But no arbitrary time can be set. Children do not develop alike, either physically or intellectually, much less religiously. Jonathan Edwards tells us of a remarkable case of conversion at the age of six; and Dr. Anthony tells us of a most unusual case of a little girl, just past four, having a vivid sense of her wilfulness and of God's love and forgiveness through childlike prayer. But these cases are unusual. But just as early as the

child begins to understand, in a limited way, what his relationship to his parents means, just so early, in a limited way, he may be made to understand the idea of a God and Father of us all, who not only made us, but also keeps us and watches over us and loves us and cares for us. It is remarkable how early in life the child's religious consciousness develops in some children and how real and how vivid these spiritual relations seem to them. It is in the very nature of the normal child to be trustful, to have a lively sense of right and wrong, to hear vividly these strange and mysterious voices of duty, "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," and to picture in his youthful imagination the reality of the unseen world. Children can be taught early in life to say their little prayers of "Now I lay me down to sleep" and to love the blessed Saviour who said "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," and to pour out their little hearts to God in simple confession of wrongdoing and in earnest request for forgiveness and help in their daily tasks and duties. A child thus raised and taught early in life to say its prayers, to love its Saviour, and to do God's will according to the extent of his childish understanding, must be considered an earnest, trustful and sincere member of the Father's spiritual household. And he is to be taught to remain in this simple, childlike attitude of trust all through life. The habit of prayer begun at his mother's knee should remain a precious heritage through all the changing experiences of life. The young heart is to be given early to its Saviour and to remain unchanged in its attitude of obedience and submission to the end of life. Paul told the Corinthians that when he was a child, he thought as a child, and spake as a child. And this must be peculiarly true of the religious child. As a religious child, he is to think as a child, to feel as a child and to act as a child. But when the spiritual life has developed into manhood, under the careful tutelage of wise and sympathetic parents and teachers, then he may put away his childish conceptions and his childish notions of things religious and enter into the full possession of his spiritual inheritance as a full grown member of God's spiritual household. But the trustfulness, the openheartedness, the

guilelessness, the purity and simplicity of his childish faith are to remain with him to the end. For "of such" is the kingdom of heaven.

And thus this conception of a personal relationship to God gives us the most beautiful and the most impressive picture of the Christian life. Begun in early childhood at his mother's knee, the child of faith and trust never outgrows his youthful idea of his spiritual relationship. With his growing intelligence and with his wider outlook upon life, his childish conception of his relation to his heavenly Father will also expand and enlarge its boundaries. His religion will become less external and less mechanical. As the deeper and more spiritual conception of his relationship to his earthly parents will gradually take possession of the child's mind and supplant his crude and somewhat imperfect notions, in like manner he will conceive of his spiritual relationship to his heavenly Father in a more profound and spiritual sense. His spiritual life grows broader and deeper and less concrete and external. But he will never outgrow the simple yet beautiful and profound conception of his spiritual life as a personal relation of friendship to his heavenly Father, because it meets the deepest needs of his soul and satisfies the profoundest aspirations of his heart. For the scholar, the philosopher or the man of practical affairs, God is still "Our Father," with all that precious word implies, and we are still his "children," created in His image, fed by His bounty, encompassed by His love, redeemed by His suffering and death on the cruel cross, and made the legatees of his spiritual inheritance, being "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus."

Pres. King in his "Reconstruction in Theology" puts this thought of the spiritual life as a personal relationship in these words: "Let us note that the whole problem of life, of morals and of religion is ultimately for us all a problem of the fulfilment of personal relations, human and divine. It is the problem of simply bringing the child to a genuine sharing of the life of the Father to a choice of character and joy like the Father's; that is finally the problem of learning to live the life of love as complete and all-inclusive."

## V. Some Practical Conclusions.

### 1. Salvation through Christian Culture the "Normal" Process.

In view of all these considerations should not this method of Christian culture be considered the normal one? As we have seen, Jesus considers the rightful place of His lambs to be in the fold with the shepherd, and the rightful place of the son to be in the father's household with the father. If the child is normally religious, as we have learned by abundant testimony, why should his conversion through gradual growth and development not be considered his normal experience? Is it not time, therefore, that the church at large lay more emphasis upon holding its children within the fold than to win them back after they have been allowed to wander away? Has not the notion reigned long enough in many churches and among many parents that children are by nature doomed to serve the world and the devil before they can be brought under the influence of the Gospel through a supernatural intervention of divine power? Should not increasingly greater emphasis be laid, in all of our religious efforts of home, school, church and Sunday school, upon the importance of careful religious training and instruction of the growing child, to the end that he may become established and strengthened in the positive, expressive side of his religious life so that he may be spared the painful experience of a continued life of sin and degradation and the consequent necessity of a radical conversion? Are parents fully aware of their tremendous responsibilities? Should there not be a revival within the church of parental responsibility for their children and of increased effort by the church to keep the children and to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord? More mothers like Hannah of old, who brought the young Samuel early to the temple and dedicated him to the service of God in prayer and self-surrender, more mothers and grandmothers like Eunice and Lois to bring up the young Timothy in the atmosphere of prayer and reverence for God's word and love for His kingdom, would bring a larger

proportion of the young people of Christian homes into right relations with God from childhood up, would save many a young life from waywardness and dissipation, and would result in adding to the church increasing numbers of members who have come by the normal process of Christian culture and Christian education.

## **2. Continual Necessity for Efforts to Save the Unconverted.**

There doubtless always will be large numbers of young people who will grow up in a careless and indifferent way and who will need the striking experience of a radical change of heart. There will doubtless always be large numbers of young people, even in Christian families, who will carelessly and thoughtlessly ignore the demands of the spiritual life or wilfully and deliberately indulge in the pleasures of sin and folly, who will therefore need a radical transformation of their spiritual natures in conversion. And hence there will always be demand for the ringing calls of a John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Special appeals to the erring ones will always be necessary. The utmost efforts must be put forth to reach the unregenerate and the lost. It is still the mission of the church, as it has always been, to seek and to save that which was lost, to go out after the erring ones and to lift up the fallen. And I wish to record right here my profound conviction of the importance of all wisely-directed efforts for the salvation and redemption of the world. We are to save the children for Christ and keep them within the fold by all the available methods within our reach. And there is much more work to be accomplished along this line than most of us realize. The Christian church and Christian educators have not become fully awake yet to the tremendous significance and far-reaching importance of Christ's words to Peter when He said: "*Feed my lambs.*" At the same time I am fully aware of the fact that, as in times past, so in the future, there will be continued necessity for special religious effort to bring the careless and indifferent to a vivid sense of their spiritual needs and responsibilities, and the wilfully disobedient and rebellious souls to the point of self-surrender and loyalty to



God through a process of radical conversion. The very fact that some souls, either through neglect or wilfulness, will always become prodigals and wander away from the Father's house makes it necessary to put forth renewed efforts to save such wanderers and bring them back to a life of obedience and loyalty.

Some natures are so constituted that they need more effort and appeal to respond to spiritual demands upon them. For such people special seasons of religious effort are helpful and almost necessary for proper growth and development. For the hardened sinner and the abandoned profligate, nothing but the most stirring and persuasive appeals will avail for salvation and redemption, and hence there will always be an urgent necessity on the part of the church "to seek and to save" that which is lost by all the legitimate methods of warning and of appeal available through the "saving influences" of the Gospel. In fact, we are to become "all things to all men," so that we may "by all means save some." And hence the "rescue work" in our big cities, the "missions" to the careless and indifferent, the "conventions" for promoting interest in special church activities, the "assemblies" for Bible study and meditation, the quiet "gatherings" of the believers for deepening their spiritual lives, the special "appeals" and united "efforts" of the church for the purpose of reaching the "indifferent" and the wilfully "disobedient," will always find an important place in the supreme mission of the church to "bring Christ to the world and to win the world for Him." But the greatest amount of effort should still be to keep the children for Christ, and to "feed the lambs," to bring up Christ's "little ones" in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." Not less effort for the spiritually "sick" to make them whole, but more effort for the spiritually "whole" to keep them from getting sick; not less effort to "raise" the fallen, but more to keep God's children from "falling;" not less of regeneration through the "new birth" for the prodigals of the world, but more of salvation through Christian culture for God's growing children—this should be the motto of the Christian church.

### 3. Religious "Awakenings" not to be Considered Conversion.

One thing more. The times of new insight into spiritual things and of a quickened conscience and of enlarged spiritual powers and conceptions, which come to most earnest Christian souls some time during the adolescent period, are not to be regarded as times of conversion. Such a season of intense religious activity in the life of a carefully trained Christian child is a "spiritual awakening" for the soul to the fuller realization of its spiritual powers and capacities. Some foolishly and ignorantly call these seasons of renewed spiritual activity and of enlarged spiritual capacities the "new birth." But this is manifestly a wrong conception. Some natures have a number of these "spiritual awakenings," or periods of intensified spiritual activity, during their religious experience. The normal man has "awakenings" or periods of sudden insight and of renewed enlargement of his powers at certain periods of his life on the social, the intellectual and the æsthetic side of his growth and development. But these "awakenings" in the social and intellectual life of the growing child are easily explained. They are moments of accelerated growth and of intensified activity during which the educative processes grow more rapidly apace, and the social and intellectual powers enlarge their boundaries by leaps and bounds. The same seasons of accelerated growth and of enlarged spiritual capacities frequently occur in the spiritual development of the soul. These "awakenings" of seemingly new spiritual powers and capacities are not to be considered as "steps" into the kingdom, but as religious experiences "within" the kingdom itself, through which God graciously enlarges the spiritual boundaries of the soul and grants it momentary glimpses of heavenly visions or deeper soundings of God's infinite wealth of spiritual riches. Such an experience of "enlargement" and of "vision" the Apostle Paul had when he was caught up into the third heaven and "heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter," or when he besought the Lord earnestly that the thorn in his flesh might be removed from him, and the Spirit said unto him:

"My grace is sufficient unto thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

It is well to bear this fact in mind. These religious "awakenings" are by no means unique experiences, but are of frequent occurrence in the intellectual and social life of many individuals. As Prof. Starbuck points out: "The instances are numerous in solving problems, making inventions, reaching scientific conclusions, and the like, of persons *feeling after* an idea with unrest and perplexity until the result is finally presented to clear consciousness, ready-made." It is not an uncommon thing for some minds to have experiences of "sudden awakenings" to a sense of new powers or of new truths in their intellectual development. Such experiences might well be called an intellectual "new birth," but they require no new powers or faculties of the mind, but simply an increased activity and a sudden deepening and enlarging of the powers and faculties inherent in the human mind and capable of training and development by proper educational processes. In like manner, some spiritual natures have "times" and "seasons" of renewed activity, of greater vividness and responsiveness and of a keener sense of the depth and reality of the spiritual life, but these experiences require no new spiritual powers or faculties for their rational explanation. And it is to be remembered that only certain types of temperament are subject to these special awakenings. As in the intellectual life, so in the spiritual life, there are occasional "crises" or "awakenings" for certain religious temperaments, usually accompanied by some emotional upheaval and some element of strain and conflict, but these are, however, not to be regarded as indications of new-born powers and faculties, suddenly called into life by the Spirit of God, but as "stages" of advancement in the spiritual progress and "seasons" of enlargement and of greater fulness in the spiritual development of the soul's inherent capacities.

#### 4. The Fundamental Thought, the One "Great Question."

The fundamental thought underlying the whole question of conversion and the nature and origin of the Christian life is the:

Fatherhood of God and the benevolent attitude of the soul towards God. God is our Father and we are His children. We cannot get away from this fact. Our heavenly Father loves us and desires us to love and serve Him. His heart is full of compassion. He hates sin but loves the sinner and has exhausted His divine resources to bring the human soul into right relations with Him. How beautifully Jesus has illustrated those truths in His parables of the Great Supper, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son. The sheep belong to the shepherd and he is concerned about them whether they remain in the fold or wander away and are lost. The prodigal is still a son whether he acknowledges his sonship or not. He can get away from his father's presence, but not from his sonship. And God, by His very nature, cannot and will not cancel the sonship. Whether we choose to remain in the spiritual fold or wander away into the mountains of sin to be rescued and brought back with rejoicing, we are still members of God's chosen flock. Or whether we prefer to grow up in the Father's family, or choose to separate ourselves from God by voluntary sin and disobedience for a season, or even forever, we are nevertheless God's children, made in His image, imbued with His life and spirit, and endowed with the spark of immortality. God loves and cares for His flock. He desires the children of His spiritual household to remain with Him. Simply to wander away from the flock is not the normal act. Neither is it a filial act to leave the father's house like the prodigal did. To grow up in the fold, to remain under the paternal roof are the normal, sane and natural things to expect. The Father's love and care are over all. How natural, therefore, and how beautiful for the growing young life, born of Christian parents and reared in Christian families to unfold its spiritual nature, under the vivifying influences of the Spirit, as the blooming flower unfolds its fragrant petals to the warmth and sunshine of a spring morning. Surely this ought to be the ideal way. And it is the possible way and also the actual way for large numbers of God's dear children.

What a blessed thing it is to know that God has set no arbitrary standards for admission to His kingdom. Whether we come as

the prodigal came, through repentance and remission of sins after a period of waywardness or rebellion, or as the young Timothy, through Christian training and education; the one great question is, "Have we come to Jesus and given our hearts to Him in loving obedience." Not the manner of our entrance to the kingdom, but the blessed fact that we are actual disciples of the Master now is the one great thing to be considered. The question of supreme and overshadowing importance is not the one of time, or place, or circumstances of our coming to Christ, but the essential fact that we have actually come to Jesus, that He is our Saviour, Redeemer and Friend, here and now, and that we love Him and serve Him in sincerity and in truth with all our hearts and with all our souls, with all our strength and with all our might; and that we love our neighbors as ourselves, irrespective of when that love began to manifest itself or how it came into our hearts. What a blessed thing it is that we are not called upon to give an account of where we first met Jesus face to face, or when we first heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and I will give you rest," and heeded its pleading tone, or even how we were brought into loving relationship with the Master so that we might enjoy His precious spiritual companionship without interruption. No! No! Not how we came, or when we came, or where we came to Jesus and learned to know and to love Him, but *that* we came to a saving knowledge of our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, and *that* we have yielded Him the loyal homage of our hearts and the loving service of our lives, and *that* we can say, and say with assurance and confidence, as Paul could say to the Colossians: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to save that which I have committed unto Him against that day," *this is "the one thing needful,"* this is the supreme and all-inclusive question of our lives. If we *know* ourselves as children of God's spiritual household, if we know that we have given our hearts unto God and that we have entrusted our lives to His keeping, if we are confident that we have submitted our wills to His blessed will and that our supreme desire in life is to do the will of God, not only in word and in promise, but in "deed and in truth;" if we know deep down in our hearts that

supreme love to God and a disinterested love to our fellowmen are the ruling passions of our lives, then we may rest assured with absolute certainty that "it is well with our souls," and that our title to membership in God's spiritual kingdom is absolute and unimpeachable, because attested by Jesus Christ himself when He said: "And this is life eternal, to know thee as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send," and by the seal of the Holy Spirit in the words: "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name.*"

The following verses express this same thought most beautifully and may, therefore, serve to bring this part of our treatise to a fitting close:

You ask me *how* I gave my heart to Christ?

I do not know.

There came a yearning for Him in my soul,

So long ago.

I found earth's flowers would fade and die—

I wept for something that could satisfy;

And then—and then—somehow I seemed to dare

To lift my broken heart to Him in prayer.

I do not know—

I cannot tell you *how*;

I only know

He is my Saviour now.

You ask me *when* I gave my heart to Christ?

I cannot tell.

The day, or just the hour, I do not now

Remember well.

It must have been when I was all alone

The light of His forgiving spirit shone

Into my heart, so clouded o'er with sin;

I think—I think 'twas then I let Him in.

I do not know—  
 I cannot tell you *when*;  
 I only know  
 He is so dear since then.

You ask me *where* I gave my heart to Christ?  
 I cannot say.  
 That sacred place has faded from my sight,  
 As yesterday.  
 Perhaps He thought it better I should not  
 Remember where. How I should love that spot—  
 I think I could not tear myself away,  
 For I should wish forever there to stay.  
 I do not know—  
 I cannot tell you *where*;  
 I only know  
 He came and blessed me there.

You ask me *why* I thought this loving Christ  
 Would heed my prayer?  
 I knew He died upon the cross for me—  
 I nailed Him there?  
 I heard His dying cry, "Father, forgive!"  
 I saw Him drink death's cup that I might live;  
 My head was bowed upon my breast in shame!  
 He called me—and in penitence I came.  
 He heard my prayer!  
 I cannot tell you *how*,  
 Nor *when*, nor *where*;  
 Only I love Him *now*.

### PART THREE.

## RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CONVERSION.

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Conversion, as we have seen, consists in a radical change of heart and life for the wilfully and deliberately unrepentant, and in a gradual unfolding of the religious nature through Christian culture for the child of religious parents and surroundings. What is involved in these fundamental changes has been discussed under conversion. It will be the purpose of this portion of our treatise to consider more particularly the affective experiences of conversion, and to discuss what the states and changes of conversion are in respect to the emotional side of the transaction. The term "religious experience" is commonly used to define the subjective aspect of conversion. It is that element in conversion which manifests itself in the feelings rather than in states of intelligence or the disposition of the will. Indeed, the question is frequently asked, how may we know that we have passed from death unto life? Are there not some subjective states of religious feeling which are the test and proof of conversion? Is there not a witness of the spirit by which we may know with certainty that we are the children of God? In other words, may we not feel with unmistakable definiteness and spiritual fervor that we have experienced the new birth, and that we have entered into our spiritual inheritance?

Most assuredly there is an emotional element in religious experience which is not to be ignored. There is a witness of the spirit which bears witness to our spirits that we are the children of God. There is an inner attestation of the reality of the new birth in the full realization of new spiritual powers



that have come into our lives through conversion. This element of feeling in the religious life, which is an accompaniment of all deep religious changes, and which contributes so large a measure of happiness or unhappiness to our spiritual states, is the emotional element in religion, or so-called religious experience. It is not a matter of belief nor a state of the will. It is what Jonathan Edwards calls the "Religious Affections."

## I. Varieties of Religious Experience.

That the experiences of people in conversion should be varied and diverse is self-evident. Men have widely different experiences in all the other interests and responsibilities of life. No two people have exactly the same states of feeling in any affair of human interest or human activity. It is only natural, therefore, that the great crises of the religious life, the times and seasons when the soul wrestles with its eternal destiny, should affect different natures quite differently. Men differ widely in temperament, in intellect, in social and religious antecedents, in power of feeling and capacity for expression. All these factors affect men very differently in all other experiences of life. Why should they not affect them even more diversely in matters of religious experience? The spiritual interests of man are his most vital and his most important concerns. Man is most profoundly affected on the side of his spiritual nature. Temporal and eternal destinies are determined by our religious attitude. And when the great religious crises come upon us, and the soul wrestles with the conflicting forces which seek to take possession of it, then we may expect a stirring of the emotional nature to its very depth, and religious experiences as varied and diverse as human souls differ in temperament, training and innate capacity. On the other hand, the soul that enters into the fullness of its spiritual experiences through the gradual process of religious development and growth would manifestly not require as sudden and radical changes in its formative processes, and hence would not be so likely to experience such pronounced states of religious feeling.

In general we may say there are four distinct types of religious experience in conversion: (1) The "revival" type, which is the product of strong religious excitement and which is usually accompanied by excessive emotion; (2) the "spontaneous" type, which is the product of a seemingly spontaneous religious awakening not in a public gathering, and which is also accompanied by a strong emotional element; (3) the "volitional" type, in which the change is largely one of moral attitude, unaccompanied by much religious emotion; (4) the "gradual-growth" type, or the type of "Christian culture," which is the product of a gradual unfolding and development of the spiritual nature through careful religious training. Both the revival and the spontaneous types are accompanied by strong emotional disturbances, and hence might be properly called the "emotional" type of conversion, or the type of self-surrender. The "volitional" type and the "gradual-growth" type consist largely in the intelligent choice of the good and in conscious voluntary effort to conform to the higher spiritual standards and requirements as revealed in the life and example of Jesus Christ, and might be called the "volitional" type of conversion. The one is predominately emotional in character, and involves usually a radical and often a violent change of disposition and feeling; the other is prevailingly volitional, and involves more of intelligent choice and conscious effort toward spiritual ends. The one is measured largely in terms of feeling; the other in terms of will and conscious effort toward benevolent ends.

### **1. The Emotional Type of Conversion.**

This is the type which Prof. Starbuck designates the "self-surrender" type. In this class belong the people whose spiritual transformation comes suddenly and strikingly, and whose experiences are usually vivid and intense in their religious fervor. The striking and abrupt changes involved in the emotional type of conversion may be occasioned by special religious services and by a more or less continuous state of religious interest and excitement. It occurs usually in connection with revival services

or during periods of high religious tension of some kind or other. The spontaneous type usually has a deeper origin and cannot be attributed, as a rule, to any visible or tangible influence as the occasion or cause of the striking changes in feeling and disposition. The revival type is produced under certain well-known religious conditions and by clearly understood religious causes, and usually conforms to certain accepted standards of experience. The spontaneous type is of a more remote and more mysterious origin and occurs under widely different conditions of religious surroundings, and expresses itself not infrequently in unusual forms of religious experience. In both types the religious feelings are powerfully and profoundly agitated. Here belong the people who pass from death unto life with a struggle and who usually experience a season of sorrow and anguish for past sins before conversion, and of joy and rapture in the possession of peace and forgiveness after conversion. It is not unusual to find cases of the most extreme and violent eruptions of the emotional nature in this type of experience. The sense of sorrow and remorse for sin during the period of conviction and the feeling of joy and spiritual exaltation after the sense of relief has come in forgiveness are sometimes so pronounced that they take the form of tumultuous and violent disturbances of the emotions, resulting not infrequently in visions, hallucinations, uncontrollable movements of the body or in a sudden collapse of the nervous system in a dead swoon. With people of strongly emotional natures and under intense religious excitement, the most extraordinary inward experiences of a super-normal and super-sensuous character may be had. Thus Jonathan Edwards in his "Religious Affections": "Some have impressed upon them ideas of a great outward light, and this they call a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory. Some have had ideas of Christ's hanging on the cross and His blood running from His wounds, and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ crucified, the way of salvation by His blood. Some have had lively ideas of heaven and of Christ on His throne there, and shining ranks of saints and angels; and this they call seeing heaven opened to them. Some from time to time have had a lively idea of

a person of a beautiful countenance smiling upon them; and this they call a spiritual discovery of the love of Christ to their souls. And they regard these things as spiritual discoveries, for they can see them when their eyes were shut. And in like manner, the imaginations of some have been impressed with ideas of the sense of hearing. They have had ideas of Christ's speaking comforting words to them, or of explaining passages of Scripture. These things they have called hearing the voice of Christ spiritually in their hearts, having the witness of the spirit, and the inward testimony of the love of Christ." Edwards remarks in this connection that while some people regard these peculiar and special inner manifestations as supernatural, he does not, because they can be explained on other grounds. He adds: "It is known by abundant experience that it is not the advancing or perfecting human nature which makes persons more capable of having such lively and strong imaginary ideas, but that on the contrary, the weakness of body and mind and distempers of **body**, make persons abundantly more suggestive of such impressions." And yet Jonathan Edwards was a strong believer in the emotional type of conversion and in the value of the religious affections.

That many of the strong religious characters of history have been of this rather extreme emotional type is abundantly illustrated by such religious leaders as Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards and many others. Such powerful emotional natures joined to vigorous intellects and well-balanced wills constitute the religious geniuses of the world; men who move the world mightily on the religious side by their influence and who shape the policies of religious organizations and who formulate the dogmas of religious belief for the churches. These are the men of powerful religious impulses and of fearless religious convictions. Their emotional currents run rapidly and usually unevenly. Their emotional states lack equilibrium. Such lives are more or less stormy and agitated, but they are never dull. Religious leaders of this type have strong convictions of truth, warm affections for friends, and a lively hatred for their enemies. They are impatient of delay. They can, with

difficulty, brook resistance. They grow restless under opposition, and often appear arbitrary and dictatorial in their spiritual demands. Such natures make typical religious leaders. They condemn sin in vigorous terms and with an unsparing hand, because they themselves once tasted its bitterness and hollowness. They are ever ready to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies. They can stir men's souls to lofty enthusiasm because they themselves are full of glowing inspiration. These are the spectacular and dramatic men of religious history. Thus we have a Paul before a frenzied mob, defending himself and declaring his innocence; a Luther, fearless and even defiant, before the assembled nobles of the temporal and spiritual realm; a John Knox, making kings and queens tremble in fear and anger upon their thrones. That such impulsive and passionate natures should experience unusual religious agitation and exaltation of spirit is, therefore, a thing to be expected, and marks them as men of unusual power and influence.

On the other hand, these strong, emotional natures, uncontrolled by a vigorous intellect and by a firm, steady will, become the religious cranks of the world and the pious fanatics of religious bodies. In the case of many such extreme emotional natures, the religious feelings color the entire life of the individual. Religion for such natures consists more in an enjoyable state of feeling than in an attitude of the benevolent will. And as the feelings are bound to fluctuate, the religion of such natures is bound to fluctuate with the feelings, and to be unsteady and uneven in its life and flow of spirit. Religion as benevolent character and as social service has for such people little attraction unless it bubbles over with excitement and is aglow with feeling. This is one extreme as over against the cold, unfeeling intellectuality of the other extreme. The great danger is that this type of religious experience may be regarded as the normal type, whereas the real facts in the case are that it is the abnormal and extreme type. And although such natures have their due place in the church and contribute the largest measure of service to the music of the church and to the encouragement of the prayer-meeting, and to the support of all religious enterprises by word

of mouth, yet their real influence is frequently discounted and their efforts underrated because of their emotional extravagance and their seeming inconsistency and hypocrisy.

In every typical case of emotional conversion there is present in the consciousness of the penitent a sense of sin and guilt involving dissatisfaction with and remorse for past life, and a sense of relief and equilibrium after the crisis has been passed, manifesting itself in varying degrees of happiness and religious exaltation. But the motives which lead to the crisis of regeneration, the particular states of unhappiness preceding and of happiness following the act of self-surrender are various and manifold. They make an interesting study.

Prof. Starbuck in his analysis of numerous cases of emotional conversion, as given in his "Psychology of Religion," finds the motives for taking the decisive step of self-surrender into the Christian life many and varied. They seem to fall naturally into eight groups: fears, other self-regarding motives, altruistic motives, following out a moral ideal, remorse and conviction for sin, response to teaching, example and imitation, urging, and other forms of social pressure. As Prof. Starbuck points out, such expressions occur among the numerous replies received: "The terrors of hell were dwelt on at revival until I became so scared I cried," writes one. Another one: "I wanted the approval of others." And again: "Father had died and I thought I would get to meet him." Still another wrote: "I felt I must be better and do more good in the world." "It was love for God who had done so much for me." A desire for a higher ideal of life led one to write: "I had a yearning for a higher ideal of life." "I wanted to be good and to control my anger and passions." Under remorse and conviction we have such expressions as these: "I was thoroughly convicted of sin." "Remorse for my past conduct was my chief motive." "My sins were very plain to me." Another one writes: "Mother talked to me and made the way of salvation plain." "A pleading word from my teacher helped me." And again: "I saw so many becoming good that I just had to become a Christian." Here we have the example of others as a strong motive. It appears from these examples and from many

others which might be quoted that fears of hell and punishment have greater prominence than hope of heaven and love for Christ in the emotional type of conversion. These statistics show what a small part rational considerations usually play in this kind of conversion. And this may account for the fact that there are so many cases of back-sliding and failure in the revival type of conversion. The feelings are usually too strongly excited, the intelligence and the reason are not sufficiently consulted and hence no profound moral change is wrought in the will, with the usual result, moral failure and a "falling from grace."

The emotional states accompanying and following conversion of this type are equally diverse. There is a great difference in the intensity of the emotions, from almost no perceptible feeling on the one hand to examples of the most vivid and intense experiences of pain and joy at the other extreme. Various terms are used by Prof. Starbuck's respondents to define the emotional content during conversion. Such expressions as these are used: "While I was struggling in prayer, I felt a peace within. A calm came over me." "I prayed and cried to God for help. I wandered four years, seeking rest." "After much prayer I surrendered completely and had the assurance that I was accepted." "I determined to yield my heart and life to God's service." One writes: "I seemed to hear Jesus speak words of forgiveness." Another one: "I rose for prayer and felt relieved." Here is a striking case: "After failing of relief at revival, I was singing songs by myself at home. After I got through singing I sat and thought, 'Why, God does forgive me and if I live right he will help me.'" The expected feeling did not come but a sense of relief and assurance came. Another one found relief during sleep: "I read the Bible and prayed far into the night. Then I went to sleep and during the night the thing had cleared itself up in my mind and I was ready to live or die by it." This was purely emotional and unconscious without any element of choice. Another one writes: "The witness of the spirit that I was a child of God was very clear." And again: "It was a sudden awakening so I could say in my heart, our Father in heaven." Self-surrender, yielding the personal will to God's

will, a sense of sins forgiven, a feeling of oneness with God, a sense of buoyancy and of joy and of bodily lightness, weeping and shouting, peace and quietness of spirit, a sense of great relief as of a burden lifted; these and similar states of feeling are experienced by different ones under emotional pressure. In the more extreme cases of emotional conversion, the feelings are reduced to the last degree of tension and then recoil. They are pent up and suddenly burst. Life appears to force itself to the farthest extreme in a given direction, and then to break forth into free activity in another direction. Perhaps the purest type of self-surrender is found in such cases of conversion as those of drunkards, like John B. Gough and H. H. Hadley.

It is to be noted also, in accordance with Prof. Starbuck's analysis of conversion-cases that joy and the intenser emotions are more frequently with males, while the sense of oneness and acceptance is with females; also, that the cases of physical and nervous excitability are more numerous in the cases of conversion in religious gatherings, while the calmer spiritual experiences of peace, happiness and the feeling of acceptance with God are more characteristic of the cases of conversion at home and alone. The comparison in the same persons of the feelings before conversion and after conversion is also suggestive. In general, it may be said that the more deeply and violently the emotions were disturbed before conversion the intenser the experiences of joy and exaltation will be after conversion. Or, as Prof. Starbuck puts it: "The disposition which feels keenly before conversion reacts violently at the crisis and has the more intense experiences afterward. Those who are thrown back on themselves and experience markedly the sense of sin and depression are the ones who are thrown vigorously in the direction of the new life. It will be observed also that the temperament which shuts itself against new influences, as evidenced by resistance before conversion rarely ever experiences joy; while on the contrary a more open nature, as indicated by prayer and effort, feels joy and acceptance afterward."

The results of the emotional type of conversion, of both the revival and the spontaneous type, are, of course, varied. For



many the process is one of enlarged powers and of increased capacity for usefulness and service. The high spiritual plane reached by some converts under great stress of feeling is to many a precious memory and a constant source of inspiration. On the other hand, large numbers find the exalted states of the new life slip away from them in the common round of duties to be performed and they relapse again into coldness and indifference. That numbers of God's children are swept into the kingdom by the strong currents of religious feeling, either incited in public gatherings or spontaneously awakened in quiet and solitude, is abundantly illustrated by the testimony of history and of human experience. That the results of many of these emotional conversions are far-reaching and permanent cannot be doubted. That many hopeful converts, buoyantly swept along at first by strong religious excitement and supremely happy for a while in a new-found peace and joy, soon experience a loss of religious glow, become discouraged and disheartened, and eventually drop out by the wayside, cannot be doubted either. Revulsions of feeling must inevitably come as a reaction from the high tension of nervous excitement. And this is followed in its track by countless cases of back-sliding, whose last state unfortunately is often worse than the first. The dangers of emotionalism in religion are only too apparent. As President David Starr Jordan, of Leland Stanford University, says (as quoted by Prof. Starbuck): "Sterile emotions are not religion, and hysteria of the same nature as drunkenness may be even more dangerous, because it is insidious, and because it may come under the protection of the honored church. It is certain that chronic religious excitement is destructive to the higher life. The great efforts put forth to save the sinner, should not be used as a dissipation for those who believe themselves saints."

## 2. The Volitional Type of Conversion.

In this type of conversion "the regenerative change is usually gradual and consists in building up, piece by piece, of a new set of moral and spiritual habits." In adults the process partakes more

of the nature of reform or a breaking away from old habits and forming new habits. In children it is a gradual unfolding of the child's religious nature through wise and sympathetic moral training. The one type involves a double process, a breaking away from a life of sin and a building up of a life of obedience and righteousness. The determining factor is the will, a conscious choice. This is the type of the prodigal. The other type is one of gradual development, of awakened powers, of new relations, of building by degrees in the consciousness of the child a moral attitude of trust in God and union with His spirit. Both types emphasize the supreme importance of the rational will in the conscious choice of the good in life. Both types subordinate the feelings to their normal place and lay stress upon the necessity of building the Christian character upon the substantial elements of rational thought and the benevolent will. It is the Scriptural type. The wilfully disobedient is to turn away from evil and to learn to do good. He is to crucify his flesh, to abandon the old life and follow the Master in the new life of the spirit, whatever his feelings in the matter may be. Or it is the type of the young Samuel, hearing the voice of God calling to him in the temple to a larger life; or of the young Timothy, of pious parentage, who was taught to know the Scriptures from his youth up and to consider himself a member of the spiritual household of faith by virtue of his Christian training and education.

This more quiet and less dramatic kind of religious experience must be recognized as just as valid and useful as the more violent and dramatic kind. And yet, as Prof. Bowne tells us in his "Immanence of God," "there has been a very general tendency in the history of the church to look upon emotional ebullencies, anarchic raptures, anomalous and spectacular experiences as the truly classical manifestations of religion." And it is even now too much the fashion in some quarters and by some narrow and uncharitable religionists of the emotional type, to assert that there can be no genuine conversion, no true, saving states of grace, without the violent experiences of a sudden and striking emotional conversion. This view is unwarranted by Scripture and unsubstantiated by healthy Christian experience. Just as we have to

recognize the validity and reality of the intenser kinds of religious feeling in conversion, when it occurs under strong religious excitement as well as strong social excitement, so we must with equal justice and for like reasons, recognize the reality and the validity of a less dramatic experience of conversion or of a less spectacular entrance into the kingdom. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." It also bloweth how it listeth. Its strength and effect are not alike in all cases. The presence of the spirit is not always nor even usually with demonstrations of power and the excitement of the spirit. The operations of the divine spirit on the soul are usually without excitement or confusion. Not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, nor in the whirlwind, but in the "still small voice," did Elijah detect the presence of the spirit and power of God.

It has been too much the custom in some religious bodies to lay stress upon the more striking and explosive types of religious experience, and to underestimate or else to ignore entirely, the more quiet and unobtrusive kind, which is after all the normal and ideal type. Some men enter the kingdom by shouting and hallelujahs, but the larger proportion by the more quiet and more uneventful method of simply doing the will of God and trusting in the loving kindness of the heavenly Father. There are souls who must pass through conflict and strife into the state of redemption, not because God must be importuned and wrestled with, as though He were unwilling to grant His favor, but because their own pride and stubbornness of will are unwilling to yield in self-surrender without a struggle. But most assuredly not all the children of the kingdom are obliged to pass through a "storm and stress" period before they can find peace with God. The great saints of the kingdom have had unusual careers of struggle and conflict, of vision and ecstasy. But not so the rank and file of the army of God's host. To take the unusual, the extraordinary and the striking kind of religious experience as the ideal type to be sought after and to be cultivated is to set false and unnatural standards. To ignore the common, everyday simple life of faith and trust of the average child of God is both a wrong and an injustice. It is surely

important that the full value of a simple, trustful life of faith should receive more abundant recognition in the literature of the Christian church and in the language of religious leaders in public gatherings. For most children of Christian parentage and surroundings the religious life, if carefully and sympathetically trained, is one of gradual unfolding, not to be measured in terms of emotional content, nor to be marked off by periods of religious ecstasy. The men who have been raised after the manner of Dr. E. E. Hale, who says he always knew God loved him, are the representatives of what Prof. James calls the "once born," the types of "healthy-mindedness," the natures who are born "with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well-balanced from the outset, and whose impulses are consistent one with another, and whose wills follow without trouble the guidance of their intellect, whose passions are not excessive and whose lives are little haunted by regret." "So that the awakening of the new life for them comes as quietly as the growth of a plant, and it is impossible to mark off periods of growth in their religious development," as Prof. Starbuck would say. To be raised in a Christian family, to be dedicated at an early age to the service of God in prayer by Christian parents, to be brought from childhood's early dawn to love and to do the right for Jesus' sake, to be early imbued with the goodness and mercy of a kind heavenly Father, to be willing and ready to accept new truths or new obligations as they may be presented to the childish understanding by loving parents or faithful teachers, to love the Lord Jesus Christ with all the earnestness and intensity of a child's affectionate nature, to be conscious of one's self-surrender to the holy will of God for a life of trust and service, and to continue thus with increasing earnestness of purpose and renewed loyalty to the pure and unselfish ideals of one's early spiritual enthusiasm to the end of life, this surely is a possible experience because lovingly and reverently attested by thousands who have known of no other way. It is the ideal way. Why should not all of God's children learn to love and serve their heavenly Father from childhood up and never depart from the Father's presence and loving companionship?

A child of God who is early brought to the temple and dedicated to the service of God, as the young Samuel was, or who has a Christian mother and grandmother to teach him the Scriptures and the way of God from childhood up, as the young Timothy had, has surely many advantages over the one who has been living persistently and wilfully for a longer or shorter period of time, a life of sin and rebellion against God. He may not have the exalted and entrancing vision of an overwrought emotional conversion, but neither does he have the recollection of the bitterness and hollowness of a sinful and wasted life. He may not be able to tell the times and the seasons, nor the particular place and hour, when he was brought into the kingdom, but he does know the more blessed fact that he has passed from death unto life and occupies an humble place in the kingdom, **because** he loves the brethren. He may have blundered and fallen into momentary sin at times and thus repeated the experience of the prodigal on a small scale, but he never remained for any length of time away from the Father's house in a state of conscious estrangement from the Father. He may not have the witness of the spirit as a seal of certainty with supernatural attestation of divine power, but he has the quiet and peaceful assurance of knowledge and conviction so that he can say with Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He does have new experiences of God's love, new joys and satisfaction in His service, new vistas of His glory as he goes on in his Christian life and career, but these are not evidences of new experiences in conversion; they are simply stages in his Christian development, steps in his spiritual unfolding, tokens of the soul's spiritual health and enlargement.

### **3. Room for Both Types of Experience.**

It is only fair and just at this point to state that there are endless varieties of Christian experience which pass by almost imperceptible gradations from the striking explosive type of emotional conversion to the quiet, unassertive type of inner

assurance and of childlike trust in God's goodness and mercy. No two people have just exactly the same kind of experience. Whatever the causes may be for the great variety of religious experience, and however widely they may differ in degree and quality, we are in duty bound to recognize in others the reality and worth of their own individual experiences. The emotional religionist is very apt to question the genuineness of any other kind of religious experience not conforming to his own individual type. He is tempted to insist on a state of conflict and struggle, followed by an experience of joy and satisfaction, as the only possible condition of entrance to the new life. And if he has been brought up in the strictly revivalistic churches, he is likely to insist on the anxious bench, on public confession and on an experience of the "Power" as the only possible conditions of salvation; as though God's spirit was limited to times and places and His power circumscribed by the narrow walls of a sectarian church. On the other hand, the representatives of the unemotional type of conversion are apt to look with disfavor upon the more dramatic experiences of their emotional brethren. They are inclined to doubt the reality of any experience more striking or more pronounced than that of their own. They are tempted to question the honesty and sincerity of much of the testimony of the ordinary prayer-meeting services, especially when it comes from the lips of those whose conduct harmonizes so poorly with their professions. There undoubtedly is much that is superficial and ungenuine in the current religious testimony of supernaturalism in experience. The methods employed to bring about the desired results cannot fail to produce much shallowness and hypocrisy. Yet we must be charitable. We are in duty bound, as members of the body of Christ, to believe in each other's experience, and not to set ourselves up as judges and condemn others, who are not of our own individual type of Christian experience, to outer darkness and perdition, as though the human heart was an instrument of only one string. The emotional nature of man is a most complex and a most expressive instrument of human experience. The spirit of God can play upon it with endless variety of inner music. But the value of the music is

determined by the character of the one whose hands touch the strings and make it to vibrate. Not the instrument but the player is the matter of greatest moment. The strong, virile, resolute hand of the benevolent will, playing upon the responsive instrument of our emotional nature, may produce harmonious music of great sweetness and purity.

The chief thing is not feeling, nor ecstasy, but benevolence and good will. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." He that hath the spirit is a child of God, whatever the quality or intensity of his religious experience may have been in conversion. As Dr. Hyde says, in his "God's Education of Man": "The man who has this disposition (i. e., devout acceptance of the will of the Father), has God in his life, Christ in his heart and the Holy Spirit in his soul. It matters not whether he got it at the first hour or at the eleventh, whether through Jewish law or Greek philosophy, whether in the cathedral or in a Methodist chapel, whether the articles of his creed are thirty-nine or none, whether he succeed in living up to his aim or perpetually fails, whether he can thank God that he is not like other men, or can simply cry, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.' No man or woman to-day holds so false a creed, or accepts so false a philosophy, or knows so little or so much of Christ, or has so bad a record, or so weak a will, or so irritable a temper, or so sensuous a temperament, that he or she need remain for one instant outside the kingdom of God in consequence. For the one thing needful, the rock foundation, the oil that lights the lamp of life, the sap that makes the branch a member of the vine, the blood relationship which makes one a brother or sister of the Christ, *is the sincere disposition to do the will of God.*"

## II. Some Reasons for the Large Variety of Religious Experience in Conversion.

Experiences in matters of religion are varied for the same reason that they are not uniform in other matters of human interest. And we might well expect larger variety and greater differences in both kind and degree in this department of our emotional life,

for the simple reason that religious concerns affect us more profoundly than any other interest in life. Our religious natures are fundamentally and unchangeably predominant in the organization of our affective life. "Man is incurably religious," as has been so well said. His religious instincts are most active and influential in determining his conduct and manner of life from childhood to old age. They are among the most persistent and most potent of all the implanted dispositions and impulses of the human soul. It is practically impossible to eradicate the religious impulses of the soul even by neglect and disuse. They will assert themselves in the most striking and impressive manner in great crises of human life. Man cannot get away from the simple fact that he is more than body and more than nerves and thinking powers. His moral nature is a distinguishing characteristic which separates him by an impassable gulf even from the most intelligent and most highly developed of the lower animals. The solemn and inexorable demands of the soul in matters of duty and conscience are among the most awe-inspiring facts of human existence. The sublime grandeur of the heavens and the solemn mystery of human obligation in authoritative dictums of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" were the two most impressive facts in human life to the great German philosopher Kant. The moral life, as expressed in the human conscience, relates us not only to other sentient beings to whom we owe something, but also to the Creator and Maker of us all "with whom we have to do." We cannot get away from duty. We cannot get away from conscience. We cannot get away from God.

Religion grows out of our moral constitution. Its roots are imbedded within us in undying instincts and elemental impulses. These, uncontrolled and untamed, may lead to the grossest religious practices and to the vilest religious excesses. On the other hand, if they are held in sway by intelligence and reason and under the energizing influences of the Holy Spirit, they lead to the loftiest acts of self-sacrifice and to the noblest deeds of moral heroism. The soil for a multiform religious life is, therefore, inexhaustibly fertile. It is rich in the elements which make great variety in religious experience not only possible but even



necessary and unavoidable. We need not wonder, therefore, why the religious elements are so all-pervading in human life. They constitute a large part of life. Nay, verily, religion is life and all true moral life is religious; i. e., it relates itself to personal and divine obligations.

It will be our task in the following pages to explain some of the reasons for the widely different and even extreme types of religious experience in conversion and to discuss some of the essential conditions for the proper development and expression of the true spiritual life during its regenerative processes. Uniformity in Christian experience is not to be desired nor even expected. Extreme types, however, need explanation and they may be explained and accounted for on a psychological and religious basis. What are some of the reasons for such diversified religious experience?

### **1. The Character of the Life Led Previous to Conversion.**

One of the reasons for differences in emotional experiences during conversion is the character of the life led previous to conversion by the convert. Two men of similar temperament and spiritual capacity would evidently not be subjected to the same kind of struggle and conflict in conversion if one had been all his life-time a moderately clean and pure man morally, while the other had been a persistent transgressor of practically all the commandments of the decalogue. It is no small matter to reconstruct and transform a human heart whose moral fibres have been set wrong and hardened by continual use in immoral acts. Conversion means the reconstruction of the whole moral man, and hence the more warped the moral nature has become and the more easily and spontaneously the moral organism acts in response to selfish and immoral motives, the more of an effort it will be to regenerate the moral organism and to make its fibres respond easily and naturally to lofty and unselfish influences. The hardened criminal and the careless, easy-going pleasure seeker have to pass through two entirely different subjective experiences during the process of regeneration.

That men who have been immersed in the filth of moral uncleanness should need a more radical process of cleansing than the man who has only soiled his outer garment, as it were, in moral uncleanness is evident. And surely the soul which has tasted the pleasures of sin for a season ought also to be made to taste its bitterness before it is allowed to enjoy the peace and pleasure of forgiveness. Jonathan Edwards in his exhaustive work on "The Religious Affections" puts this phase of the subject thus: "Surely it cannot be unreasonable that before God delivers us from a state of sin and liability to everlasting woe, He should give us some considerable sense of the evil from which He delivers us, in order that we may know and feel the importance of salvation, and be enabled to appreciate the value of what God is pleased to do for us. As those who are saved are successively in two extremely different states—first in a state of condemnation and then in a state of justification and blessedness—and, as God, in the salvation of men, deals with them as rational and intelligent creatures, it appears agreeable to this wisdom, that those who are saved should be made sensible of their being in those two different states. In the first place, that they should be made sensible of their state of condemnation; and afterwards, of their state of deliverance and happiness."

It is, therefore, no matter for surprise when we are told that some of the great saints who were also great sinners before their conversion had unusual experiences of inward conflict before the "old man" could be brought to the point of surrender. We do not wonder, therefore, that the spirit of intense bitterness and unrelenting hatred against the early Christians on the part of Saul, the persecutor, should have required supernatural manifestations of divine power for its transformation with accompaniments of great strife and moral conflict. Augustine was a heathen by association and by practice and went through the fiery furnace of conflict and self-torture before he emerged into the full light and sweetness of his Christian experience. Charles G. Finney, the noted evangelist, was an avowed infidel and a pronounced opponent of Christianity before his conversion. There was required on his part a tremendous inner conflict and a bitter struggle

with his spirit before his pride was broken down and the abounding peace of God's forgiveness rolled in upon him and thrilled him with joy unspeakable. Murderers and hardened criminals usually break down and cry like children under the saving influences of the Gospel. Other things being equal, great sinners should in the very nature of the case also become great penitents and converts of marked joy and exaltation of spirit.

But, as a matter of fact, the conditions and circumstances of people in conversion are not the same. Two confirmed sinners of equal moral unworthiness may have widely different experiences in regeneration. Deeply sensitive natures feel most poignantly the utter baseness of a sinful life and naturally experience most keenly the great joy of deliverance and the peace of forgiveness. And so it comes about that frequently the depth of conviction and the joy of deliverance during conversion in the case of hardened sinners, is not so pronounced as in the case of delicate women with sensitive consciences in matters of really minor offences. Dr. Geo. C. Lorimer, in his "Treatise on Conversion," makes these pertinent remarks on the subject: "The degree of this feeling (i. e., of conviction of sin) will vary. It will not be decided, however, as some preachers seem to think, by the actual guilt of the soul under conviction, but rather by its moral susceptibility. Some of the purest, most virtuous of people with whom I have had to deal in my ministry have evinced the deepest compunction of conscience and the profoundest solicitude for their condition. Children and women have manifested a pungent sorrow that strong men, whose lives have been a continued profanation of every holy thing, have failed to exhibit. I have often found it difficult in my ministrations to awaken in the professed penitential felon an adequate abhorrence of his guilt. All genuine converts will feel according to their moral sensitiveness their iniquity."

In the same line of thought Prof. Coe says this: "It is supposed by many that striking transformations in the affective or emotional life are reserved for those who have been great sinners. I know of more than one person who has been tempted to become a great sinner in order to be able to experience a brilliant

conversion. The idea seems to be that an abrupt transition from moral badness to moral goodness naturally carries great emotional disturbances with it. And doubtless such circumstances do tend to intensify whatever happens. But it does not at all appear that these circumstances are the chief factors that determine the degree of affective transformation at conversion." They undoubtedly do play an important part, but as will be shown later the chief mental qualities and states favorable to these striking experiences are expectation, abundance of feeling, and passive suggestibility, with its tendency to abnormal nervous disturbances.

## 2. Differences of Temperament Affect Religious Experience in Conversion.

We recognize temperamental differences in other experiences of life. Why should we not in the religious sphere? People differ very widely in matters of temperament and in mental and moral responsiveness and these differences are constitutional. They give color and tone to the entire emotional or affective life of the individual. Hence they would naturally determine, to a considerable extent, the quality and intensity of religious experience. And as in other vital and important interests of life we explain widely different modes of action and feeling, under quite similar conditions, to inner constitutional differences of temperament; why should we not take more cognizance of the same legitimate reasons for differences in the religious realm?

Temperament is preëminently determined by the cast of the nervous system and indirectly affected by differences in the circulatory, digestive and muscular systems of the body. Some men have sanguine temperaments, with a quick, lively, nervous response and with a buoyant, emotional disposition. Others again are of a choleric temperament, usually of dark complexion, of a more or less sluggish nervous responsiveness, but of considerable self-confidence and strength of will. Still others have the phlegmatic temperament, not easily moved or excited, with the life forces running slowly and leisurely, and disinclined to sudden, abrupt, or extreme actions of any kind. The fourth

class has the melancholic temperament, with bright expressive eyes, usually of slender figure, and with lively emotional responsiveness. These are given to poetry and music, are rather dreamy and imaginative and care little for the practical affairs of life. True, these are only types and in actual life they are usually mixed and yet they help to explain many of the inherent differences of people, differences over which they have little control.

Or again, we may characterize fundamental differences of people in proportion as their emotional, or intellectual, or their volitional natures predominate. The emotional type of character is controlled largely by the activity and intensity of the feelings, which predominate and give color and tone to their entire subjective life. In the intellectual type, the thinking processes are preëminent, and subordinate the other activities of the mind to their sway. Such natures are not easily moved, somewhat cold and calculating, little given to sentiment or tears. The volitional type is strong and dominant on the side of the will, more or less stubborn and obstinate and not easily moved by sentiment or emotional appeals of any kind. These psychological differences affect mightily people's feelings and actions in all kinds of experiences in life. They are constitutional differences, inherited from their ancestors and little subject to change or modification by training or education. In fact, they predetermine the manner to a very great extent in which people react during all the vital processes of training and education. They are consequently of the utmost importance in helping to explain the large variety of religious experiences on a rational basis.

In the ordinary concerns of life, people react on the side of their feelings in widely different ways, under similar circumstances and conditions. And yet this occasions no comment. We say people are made differently and have different natures. One young man settles the great question of his life-work without any evident strain or conflict, while another young man in much the same situation settles the same question only after much inner struggle and painful deliberation. One young man breaks a bad habit by a simple, resolute act of the will, unaccompanied by any emotional disturbance. Another young man—a personal

acquaintance—makes so simple a thing as the matter of smoking the subject of his prayers and after much wrestling with himself and much self-examination and struggle he was led to quit the “filthy and ungodly habit,” with inner transports of joy and satisfaction. The same radical differences of temperament appear in matters of love, courtship and marriage. For some, the course of love runs smoothly and uneventfully, without any moments of excessive joy or of crushing sorrow and disappointment. For others, there are great emotional disturbances, frequently affecting seriously and profoundly the entire conscious states of the individual and disturbing the normal activities and functions of his life. One’s affection and regard may be just as deep and strong as that of the other. In fact, the most passionate demonstrations of undying affection are not infrequently of the most unstable and vacillating character. One man loses a fortune and makes the best of it. Another one is broken in body and crushed in spirit by a similar misfortune. Perhaps the greatest temperamental differences appear in times of sorrow and bereavement. At the open grave of loved ones, some are burdened and heavy in spirit but fail to shed a tear or display any striking outward emotion; others find relief in uncontrollable weeping and in floods of tears. Both may have the same blessed assurance of their loved ones’ conquering faith in the hour of death and of a glorious resurrection, and both may be equally firm believers in the reality of the Christian religion and in the hope of a blessed reunion in the life beyond. The striking differences in experience are largely due to fundamental differences of temperament.

Various writers on religious experience have called attention to the importance of temperamental differences in explaining types and varieties of religious experience. But Prof. Geo. A. Coe, of the Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., was the first modern writer on religious subjects to do full justice to this phase of the subject. He made a careful investigation of seventy-seven cases of the religious experience of people in conversion, many being college students of Methodist extraction, with special reference to the matter of striking, abrupt and abnormal experiences during conversion. Of the seventy-seven cases carefully

considered and their temperaments and emotional experiences duly analyzed, it appears that of seventeen of those who expected an abrupt emotional experience in conversion and also got it, fifteen were of the emotional or sanguine type of temperament, who were also subject to other emotional disturbances, such as religious dreams, visions, communications with deceased friends, uncontrollable laughter and weeping, hallucinations, etc. Of twelve cases examined who expected a striking emotional experience during conversion but did not find it, nine were decidedly of the intellectual or choleric-phlegmatic type of temperament, and who had no unusual emotional disturbances in other kinds of experiences either. In other words, practically the entire number of Prof. Coe's subjects, who expected striking religious experiences during conversion and got them, belong to the emotional type of temperament, which is easily excited, responds quickly and freely to influences and appeals, and is subject to extreme emotional disturbances under all the various circumstances of life and of character. While on the other hand the overwhelming majority of cases which expected striking religious experience in conversion and did not find it, belong to the intellectual type of temperament, in which the thinking powers predominate and in which the will is not easily moved by the emotions.

Prof. Coe also points out the additional fact that practically all of the cases, examined by him with reference to the matter of experiencing hallucinations, dreams, visions and other supra-normal manifestations, were of the sanguine or emotional temperament. He also found that of the seventeen cases who expected and also found a striking religious experience in conversion, thirteen of them were good hypnotic subjects, while of the twelve respondents who sought an abrupt, emotional experience in conversion but did not find it, only one was a good hypnotic subject, i. e., one whose emotional nature is highly developed and who possesses the power of prompt concentration and voluntary attention. It is a striking and impressive fact that good hypnotic subjects and representatives of the striking emotional experience all belong to one type of temperament—the emotional or sanguine—melancholic kind, whereas representatives of the intellectual

and volitional types of temperament—i. e., of the phlegmatic or choleric kind—will simply not respond either to hypnotic suggestions or to intense religious influences in any marked or striking manner. The conclusion is irresistible. The manifestations of striking, abrupt emotional experiences in religion with its accompanying phenomena of dreams, visions, voices, hallucinations, motor and other automatisms and even catalepsy, are to be explained on the basis of temperament and religious excitement. The sanguine-melancholic temperament, with its emotional responsiveness, is the fruitful soil and the only soil for these striking experiences.

What then? Shall we say these abrupt emotional experiences in conversion have no moral value? Shall we, therefore, conclude that they are practically nothing but an automatic performance? It may be that but not necessarily. Intense abnormal emotional experiences may be highly moral and spiritual, and they be absolutely immoral. In themselves they have no moral value. It simply means that profound religious agitation may clothe itself "in certain emotional habiliments" provided the proper and necessary nervous organism is present, the required emotional temperament. As Prof. Coe puts it: "Would you understand the emotional aspects of religious experiences. Do not ascribe them to the inscrutable ways of God, but to ascertainable differences in men's mental constitutions; do not theorize about divine grace, but study the workings of the human mind."

Given a decided emotional temperament and the necessary conditions for its excitement and you will have experiences of a striking and unusual character. Practically all the brilliant experiences of religious history come under this type of character. These are the responsive natures which respond powerfully to stirring influences and to religious appeal. They are the Aeolian harps upon which the wind of the spirit plays its loudest and most stirring music. On the other hand, the strongly intellectual and volitional types of character not only do not respond so powerfully to religious influences, but they are so constituted that they simply cannot so respond. They do not possess the necessary religious organism. It is simply physically and therefore morally



impossible for certain natures to be profoundly and excessively moved on the side of their emotional natures by influences or appeals of any kind, because of temperament and disposition. It is simply impossible, nervously and religiously, for some people to experience religion as Jonathan Edwards did, or as Charles G. Finney did, or even as many humble professors of a certain kind of temperament have done and are doing continually. Each one must enjoy his religion, as his other experiences of life, according to the measure of his inner quality of temperament and the character of the religious influences at work.

### **3. The Time of Adolescence is Significant for Religious Changes.**

It is a most impressive fact that practically all the cases of deep religious changes occur in the period of life, from about twelve to twenty, known as adolescence. This is the time of most rapid growth, of most numerous physical and mental changes and of the most profound moral and spiritual transformations. It is in a peculiar sense the period of "reconstruction," not only for the moral life, but also for the physical and the social and the intellectual life as well.

Prof. Starbuck in his "Psychology of Religion" has called attention to the fact that "there is a normal period somewhere between the innocence of childhood and the fixed habits of maturity while the person is yet impressionable and has already capacity for spiritual insight, when conversions most frequently occur." There are isolated cases of conversion as young as six or seven years of age and as old as fifty and sixty, but these are the exceptions, not the rule. The overwhelming proportion of conversions and spiritual awakenings in life occur between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, very few being converted under eight and very, very few above thirty. Of seven hundred and seventy-six graduates of Drew Theological Seminary the largest number were converted at the age of sixteen. Of five hundred and twenty-six officers of the Y. M. C. A. in the United States and Canada, the average age of conversion was 16.5. Of two hundred and seventy-six members of the Rock River Methodist Conference as

reported by Prof. Coe, the average age of conversion was 16.4. Or, taking a total of one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four cases as reported and tabulated in Coe's "Spiritual Life," the average age of conversion is 16.4 years. The distribution of the two hundred and seventy-six members of the Rock River Conference as to age of conversion is as follows: Thirteen are reported as having been converted below nine and thirty-five below twelve years of age; twenty-three are reported as having been converted at twelve, fifteen at thirteen, eighteen at fourteen, twenty at fifteen, thirty-four at sixteen, twenty-five at seventeen, eighteen at eighteen, twenty-five at nineteen, fifteen at twenty, and thirteen at twenty-one years of age, and altogether only eleven above twenty-five and none above thirty-six years of age. Other tables of statistics give about the same results. The statistics for men who have had more or less decisive religious awakenings of a non-revival type coincide with those given above. Of ninety-nine cases of spiritual awakenings of the non-revival type reported by Prof. Coe only ten per cent. occurred under twelve years of age and only four per cent. above twenty-five years of age and seventy-six per cent. of this number fall between the ages of twelve and twenty.

These figures are supremely impressive. It is clearly evident that the largest number of religious awakenings and actual conversions fall within the period of life known as puberty or adolescence. Prof. Starbuck remarks that "during the period of most rapid bodily growth is the time when conversion is most likely to occur," and further that "the spiritual and the physical aspects of development in individual instances tend to supplement each other." In other words, the period of adolescence seems to be the most favorable period for moral and religious changes. And there are some self-evident reasons for this. It is the period of life when the child emerges from childhood into manhood, when great organic changes take place in his body, when rapid vital changes take place in his nervous organism and when spontaneous awakenings of the religious life and explosive conversions are most likely to occur because the conditions are most favorable and because the soil is well prepared. In fact, practically all of the

striking religious phenomena of abrupt conversions or of powerful spontaneous religious awakenings fall within this period of the body's most rapid growth and the spirit's most receptive and plastic condition, during which the various elements of the personal life are apt to crystalize into more or less permanent modes of thought and feeling and fixed habits of life and conduct. It is a fateful period of life, fraught with the most momentous consequences and well might it have an important bearing on the question of religious experience. It is eminently the reconstruction period of life during which the immature, childish, undeveloped self, through a process of increased physical, mental, and spiritual activity and ferment, more or less marked, emerges into the larger and fuller and completer life of manhood and thus enters, as it were, into the life of the new birth, not only socially, mentally, and physically, but also morally and religiously. It is the time of life particularly favorable, therefore, for deep religious impressions. It is both the seed and the harvest time of the young soul. It is the time when mental and intellectual life undergoes the greatest changes. It is the period of life when "new kinds of sensation and of emotion, new modes of thought, new attitudes of will, new meanings of life, new problems of duty, new kinds of temptation, new mysteries in religion" make their presence felt in the young, growing life. It is the "storm and stress" period of life for the emotional type of temperament. For the intellectual type it is the period of "intellectual and social new birth," as Prof. Stanley Hall calls it in his massive volumes on "Adolescence." It is the period, with many young people, of doubt and uncertainty, of self-examination and questionings as to the why and wherefore of their existence, of remorseless criticism of self and others, frequently of morbid self-consciousness, of high ideals and of unusual restlessness and dissatisfaction.

It is important to observe, however, that for the Christian child, trained from infancy to love the Lord and to do right, this so-called "storm and stress" period of the adolescent life is not properly called conversion. For the Christian child, the beginning of its spiritual life had its origin in the earlier years

of its Christian training and it has been continuous. But to many children thus trained in a simple, childlike life of trust and faith in God, the adolescent period brings more fulness of knowledge and more elements of conscious choice, and these the growing soul now fully and freely adopts for itself, by a conscious intelligent appropriation of the will. For many young people, too, in the adolescent period, there come moments of religious crisis more or less striking, which, though by some called conversion, are really only periods of increased spiritual activity and of a deeper insight into the meaning of spiritual things. The age of youth is specially well fitted for such awakenings or re-awakenings of the religious nature, though with many people such experiences occur more or less frequently in later life. Prof. Coe puts it thus: "The quickened conscience, with its thirst for absolute righteousness; the quickened intellect, with its thirst for absolute truth; the quickened æsthetic sense, with its intuitions of a beauty that eye hath not seen and the ear hath not heard; the quickened social sense, with its longing for perfect and eternal companionship—in short, the new meaningfulness and mystery of life—all this tends to bring in a new and distinct epoch in religious experience. If one has not been religious in childhood, now is the supremely favorable time for conversion; and if one has been religious, there is still need, in most cases, for a personal decision and personal acceptance that shall supersede the more external habits of childhood. Without giving to our terms any theological significance, we may say that conversion, or some equivalent *personalizing of religion*, is a normal part of adolescent growth."

It thus becomes increasingly evident that a consideration of the great number and variety of changes that take place in the adolescent life, say from twelve to twenty, throws much light on the differences in quality and intensity of religious experiences. In fact, this is par excellence the period not only of conversion, but also of all kinds of religious activity in the re-awakening, deepening and quickening of the spiritual life. It is well for parents and religious teachers to understand the fatefulness of this period of life, as the most opportune time for

spiritual sowing and spiritual reaping as well. It is the normal time of the catechetical class, of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor with its youthful enthusiasm, of joining the church, of engaging in all kinds of religious activities. It is the most favorable time of great moral decisions, not only with reference to one's relation to God in conversion, but also with reference to one's relation to his fellow-men in a life-calling.

It is supremely important to remember that the period of life under consideration is not only the most favorable time for sowing, but also for reaping, in the realm of the spiritual harvest field. It is the time when the spirit calls in strongest and loudest accent: "To-day, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." It is the time when every normal impulse of the soul and every youthful enthusiasm of the awakened and responsive moral nature summons the soul to high and unselfish endeavor. It is pathetic to know that those who pass through the adolescent period of life, unmoved by the influences of the spirit and unregenerated by the transforming power of the divine life, are in imminent danger of being abandoned to the spirit of the world for life and of remaining in a condition of "spiritual death" in the midst of physical and intellectual life. What an impressive fact it is, that scarcely one soul in a thousand is regenerated after thirty years of age! How important for the young to realize that the period of youth is the natural and appropriate time, ordained by God and written into their very constitutions, to open their hearts to God and to enter into their spiritual inheritance. It is the time of invitation, the time of the calling of the spirit, when not only the voice from above through the spirit of God, but also the voice from within, through the awakened conscience, summons the young life to high and unselfish service. How dangerous it is to let this plastic, receptive period of youth go by, unregenerated and unconverted, when every passing hour only confirms the ruling forces of evil and strengthens the bonds of slavery which evil habit has forged, and makes the regenerative process more difficult and more unlikely, with the result that the soul may be compelled to cry out in anguish and sorrow: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved."

#### 4. The Religious Environment Affects the Character of Experience in Conversion.

The character of the religious environment has also much to do in determining the type of religious experience in conversion. The nature of the truths emphasized to be believed and the type of religious experience held up before the penitent sinner for realization have a profound influence upon the kind of religious experience thus fostered. With proper preaching of the doctrine of total depravity in its extreme form and of an angry God to be appeased and of a literal hell fire yawning for the unrepentant sinner, a somewhat somber and austere type of experience may be developed, especially if the preaching is of the kind to stir up the feelings to lively activity. Such was the case with the Puritans, whose earnest struggle to escape from the incarnate powers and forces of evil produced a somber and somewhat austere type of Christian experience. With the preaching of God's infinite love and mercy as the key-note to the Gospel, and with emphasis laid upon the necessity of a closer union with Him in the spirit, a less dramatic but more wholesome and healthy type of religious experience is fostered. This is strikingly illustrated by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and that of Dwight L. Moody and the types of experience obtained through their preaching. Jonathan Edwards preached the terror of an angry God and of the final judgment with a most vivid reality, and his converts reacted profoundly and violently. Dwight L. Moody sang the praises of a loving heavenly Father with infinite variety and touching pathos, and most of his converts came into the kingdom with joy and gladness, but with no accompaniment of extreme emotional excesses.

Again, if the abrupt, emotional kind of experience in conversion is held up before the seekers after salvation and duly and properly emphasized, and if all the services of the church are conducted with a view of obtaining this type of experience in the "mourners" at the "anxious bench," then we may expect to see the prescribed type of conversion realized in the experiences of

the young convert so far as their temperaments are able to respond to the influences at work. Here is the key to the whole situation. In the revival type of denominations, with their protracted meetings, their intense religious enthusiasm, with the "anxious bench" and a period of "mourning" and struggle required for the seeker after God, with all the circumstances and surroundings of great emotional tension present, the most calm and unemotional natures are bound to be agitated to the full limit of their capacity, while the strongly emotional natures will be aroused to the highest pitch of tumultuous religious enthusiasm, resulting frequently in all sorts of strange and abnormal kinds of subjective phenomena. The same people, in the non-revival churches, amidst less exciting and less intense religious surroundings, would make their peace with God in self-surrender and enter into closer union with Him without any striking, abrupt emotional experience whatsoever. The kind of preaching dwelt upon and the type of conversion demanded, together with the character of the religious influences at work, determine very largely the nature of the experience obtained in conversion. The extreme type is fostered under the most favorable conditions that exist in the typical old fashioned revival services, with its surcharge of pent-up emotionalism. It is in the revival type of denominations chiefly and almost altogether that the extreme types of emotional conversion occur.

The striking, extraordinary experiences of the extreme type of emotional conversion have occasionally disturbed the peace of mind and even the serenity of spirit of the "uninitiated" for fear that, after all, there might be something superior and really essential in these seemingly supernatural manifestations. The unusual character of the phenomena has attracted attention and not infrequently defied rational explanation unless on the assumption that they were really supernatural manifestations of divine power. The feeling of absolute certainty as to one's spiritual state and the intoxicating joy of the young convert, are these not the witness of the spirit and must there not be such a witness to make the process of conversion valid? And the "power," so-called, with its hallucinations and automatisms, its exultant hallelujahs and its

vigorous, uncontrollable movements of the body in leaping and jumping, or in catalepsy, are these not the supernatural evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence, in great power? Such are the usual explanations of those who are believers in this type of conversion. And there are not a few pious people who wonder at times whether, after all, these exalted, extraordinary states of religious emotion are not superior and therefore to be coveted. And many a conscientious, sensitive soul has been persuaded to seek the supposedly blessed experiences of the "anxious bench" under the mistaken notion that such super-normal states of religious feeling were really necessary for genuine conversion and indicated a higher state of religious attainment. And frequently great pressure is brought to bear upon sensitive and nervous natures, with the confident assertion that they should be "converted" and "experience religion" in accordance with the methods and experiences of the "anxious bench" or else they would be lost forever. The test of the "power" and the actual "witness of the spirit" with demonstrations of power are made the conditions of salvation and the only conditions. And the undoubted honesty and sincerity of many who have had such striking experiences of the "power" and their confident assertion that such states are blessed states of experience, especially to be coveted, and essential to true salvation, has had its effect on many earnest souls who had no other explanation for these remarkable phenomena than that they were the supernatural evidence of divine power.

It is however possible to offer reasonable explanation for all these things. We know that any emotional nature, at certain times in life, in particular, and especially under the pressure of great religious excitement, may be moved to states of frenzy. The so-called "power" is no solitary phenomena found only among certain religious denominations and to be regarded as a special evidence of the presence of God's spirit in mighty power. It is easy to prove, without being guilty of irreverence or sacrilege, that "the striking psychical manifestations which reach their climax among us in emotional revivals, camp-meetings, and negro services have a direct relation to certain states of an essentially hypnotic



and hallucinatory kind." As Prof. Coe, who is himself a professor in a university of the strictly revival type of denomination, so aptly puts it: "The explanation of the 'power' and similar outbreaks is simple. Under the pressure of religious excitement there occurs a sporadic case of hallucination, or of motor automatism, or of auto-hypnotism, taking the form of trance, visions, voices, or catalepsy. Trances like that of the Buddha are brought about in substantially the same way, namely, by abstracting the mind from its ordinary multiplicity of interests and narrowing the attention until self-conscious control lapses and one seems to be absorbed in the infinite. All that is necessary is prolonged fixation of attention upon any simple object. It is the process actually cultivated to-day by theosophists of the type of Mrs. Besant."

All these striking experiences referred to are fostered and brought about on the human side by forces which we may understand. Barring the few solitary cases of those who have violent eruptions of their religious feelings of a seemingly spontaneous character the explanation lies on the surface. They have been produced by effort, under conditions and in accordance with laws now well known to modern psychology. There is first of all an expectation of something to be experienced; then there is the effort to arrive at the desired state of feeling, the continuous concentration of the mind upon the matter in hand, the going forward to the anxious bench, the wrestling and praying and pleading, the lively singing of stirring hymns, the clapping of hands and the shouting of hallelujahs by anxious friends, the suggestions by pastor and friends of words to repeat or a certain feeling to expect, the long, exhausting nervous strain. All these conditions finally result in a more or less sudden explosion of the emotional nature accompanied frequently by sights, visions, hallucinations, trance or catalepsy, and then a reaction, a complete collapse of the over-wrought nervous system. There is nothing mysterious or supernatural about such abnormal phenomena. Nor are they peculiar to the revival-type of the protestant denominations. "The religious history of humanity, quite apart from Christianity, is full of strange and abnormal experiences which are supposed to

be peculiarly religious. Mohammedanism and Hinduism abound in phenomena of this sort. They are even possible on the purely physiological plane through the influence of alcohol and anæsthetics and narcotics."

As to the ethical value of such striking religious phenomena, there is little agreement. The adherents of the revival-type of denominations have been accustomed to lay great stress upon them. And yet even in the house of its friends this type of religious experience is greatly discredited and no special spiritual value attributed to it. Such noted writers in Methodist institutions as Prof. Bowne of the Boston University and Prof. Coe of the Northwestern University, explain these striking, seemingly supernatural phenomena on the basis of psychological vagaries. They are simply the excrescences of religious excitement. They are "the striking psychic manifestations which reach their climax among us in emotional revivals, camp-meetings and negro services and have a direct relation to certain states of an essentially hypnotic and hallucinatory kind." If you seek to produce overpowering religious emotions, the methods and conditions are at hand. But it would be foolish to regard these striking and super-normal phenomena as special evidences of God's presence in power. And it would be equally foolish to deny any ethical value to them, if fostered and developed under ethical conditions. As Prof. James says in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," relative to the matter of striking religious phenomena: "They undoubtedly have no essential spiritual significance, and although their presence makes his conversion more memorable to the convert, it has never been proved that converts who show them are more persevering or fertile in good fruits than those whose change of heart has had less violent accompaniments. On the whole, unconsciousness, convulsions, visions, involuntary vocal utterances, and suffocation, must be simply ascribed to the subjects having a large subliminal region, involving nervous instability."

Finally, in the matter of variety in religious experience, it may be said with assurance, that the religious environment is really the greatest factor in determining religious experience in conversion. The life of the repentant sinner before conversion

has some degree of influence on the type of his religious experience during conversion. The differences in temperament explain the possibility of wide differences of emotional experience in conversion. The period of life determines the most natural and most favorable time for all kinds of religious experiences. But the matter of religious teaching and religious environment, during the process of conversion, really determines most emphatically what the character of the religious experience shall be in conversion. Young people among the revival churches are most likely to experience the abrupt, violent kinds of experience; whereas the young people among the non-revival churches, with few exceptions, will not know much of stress or conflict during their period of religious transformation. Knowing the type of temperament and disposition, and knowing the circumstances of the penitent's religious surroundings we can predict with considerable certainty what his experiences will be in conversion. The Holy Spirit works continuously and untiringly upon the minds and hearts of all unrepentant souls. Whenever the soul responds and turns to God in anticipation and earnestly desires a closer union with the Father, the answer will come and the indwelling spirit will make His presence felt with varying degrees of assurance and joy, depending upon the quality of the seeker's inner constitution and upon the external circumstances of his conversion. But the vital thing is not the varying degrees of feeling, accompanying the process, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with cleansing and transforming power.

This type of extreme, abnormal experience has been unduly emphasized in some denominations and has wrought great wrong and injustice upon many less emotional natures, just as sincere and honest in their spiritual lives, but not capable of enjoying such extreme states of religious feeling. The effect has been most unfortunate and it has wrought evil in three ways, as Pres. King points out in his excellent pamphlet on "Christian Training and the Revival as Methods of Converting Men": "First it has tended to lay a quite unwholesome emphasis upon the form of religious experience, instead of upon the real fundamental ethical relation to God and men; second, it has tended to lead men to more or less

superficial and self-deceived imitation of others' experiences; third, it has tended to throw into deep darkness and almost despair some of the most conscientious and clear-sighted men and women, whose temperament hardly allowed the experiences sought and who could not deceive themselves as to the form of their experience, but knew that they had not come into an experience of the prescribed type. These three mistakes are still being repeated again and again by many most earnest and conscientious religious leaders."

In other words, it is quite natural for men of a striking religious experience to insist that all men must have the same kind to be valid. And because the religious leaders of the world have been very frequently and perhaps usually men of the emotional type, this type came to be held up as the standard and truly certified type, not to be departed from. And the invariable danger has been to discount all milder and quieter types of experience as lacking the essential spiritual quality. But knowing better the origin and nature of religious emotions and the conditions under which they are fostered abnormally, we can interpret these things more intelligently and judge them more rationally.

### III. What is not Essential in Religious Experience.

What then are the really essential things in religious experience, and what are the things which are non-essential? We have seen that there are emotional experiences of endless variety in conversion, and we have considered some of the reasons for this variety. We have found that the more extreme types of religious experience in conversion depend upon temperamental conditions for their existence and upon excessive religious excitement for their development and their manifestations. But we have also found that these are not the essential things in religion. Let us consider, first, what are not to be regarded as essential experiences in conversion so that we may afterward consider more intelligently what are the really important and all-essential things in Christian experience.

## 1. States of Feeling are not Essential.

It is greatly to be deplored that so many people confuse their feelings with states of religion. It is a matter of deep regret that so much emphasis is laid by many religious leaders upon the matter of feeling in religion, as though the amount of religion in a seeker after God could be measured by the intensity of his religious emotions. It is a great pity that so many struggling souls are disturbed and distressed beyond measure by the mistaken notion that unless they have a vivid and overpowering sense of religious emotion they cannot be regarded as being in a state of salvation, when as a matter of fact the Bible does not require any distinct or specific state of feeling at all for discipleship. Not feeling, but faith; not emotion, but self-surrender; not ecstasy, but obedience; these are the biblical requirements.

Prof. F. G. Peabody, in his "Jesus Christ and the Christian Character," has this to say in the relation of the feelings to religion and their ethical value: "Feeling, therefore, has in itself no moral value. Strictly speaking, there is no ethics of the emotions. The emotions are corollaries to be drawn, rather than problems to be solved. They are the wave which leaps up in light and color on the crest of the heaving ocean. If the sea is deeply stirred, its crest will inevitably carry the foam of feeling; if the sea is sluggish and flat, the whitecaps of emotion cannot be induced to break. The ethics of emotion, then, is to be sought, not in the emotion itself, but in the source from which it proceeds. Feelings which are apparently akin may be, ethically, strangers to each other. The sense of the beautiful may be either a spiritualizing and refining grace, or a degrading and sensual self-indulgence. Religious mysticism may express itself either in exalted vision or in fleshly ecstasies. Even the supreme emotion of love, whether to God or to man, may represent loyalty, sacrifice and service, or may exhaust itself in ineffective sentimentalism and pious rapture." The feelings are only accompaniments of our moral attitude, testifying more or less strongly to the rightness or wrongness of our moral course, but in themselves they have

no moral value. They are not things to be sought after or ends to be attained. The issues of life and the decisions of character lie not in our religious feelings and experiences but in the conscious and deliberate attitude of our hearts and in the disposition of our wills. Religious feelings are not character-determining. They often come and go fitfully and arbitrarily. They are not of the essence or vital content of spirituality. They may be caused by certain physical conditions; they may be explained on the basis of temperament, they may be fostered by stimulation and they may even be counterfeited.

If there were any importance attached to certain states of religious feeling, or if a striking emotional experience in conversion were necessary then surely there ought to be evidences of such necessity either in the teachings of Scripture or in the examples of conversion as recorded in the Bible. But we look for such evidences in vain. "In the New Testament we find no preference given to revivals or to the experiences which they foster. Jesus makes no clear reference to anything of the sort. Much less does He directly or indirectly command such methods of work or the seeking of such experiences. Among His immediate disciples not one appears to have passed through conversion phenomena of the emotional type and only Paul, of all New Testament characters, stands out as a clear case of the kind." But Paul himself does not appear to have taken his own experience as a standard of conversion, nor to have demanded striking religious phenomena in others, or even that he commonly witnessed them in his converts. Other New Testament conversions were decidedly unlike Paul's. The blind Bartimæus, who called upon Jesus for mercy and healing, received the assuring answer, "Thy faith has made thee whole," and immediately he followed the Master with great rejoicing. The woman at the well simply allowed the Master's spirit to come into her life and change it, and immediately went and told her friends that she had found the promised Messiah. The Philippian jailor asked with fear and trembling: "What must I do to be saved," and was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and without any prolonged period of agony of spirit he received

the blessing as it was in Christ Jesus and was forthwith baptized. Zacchæus desired to see Jesus, receiving Him in his house by invitation and forthwith declared his intention to abandon unrighteousness with the result that Jesus said: "To-day salvation has come into this house." The Ethiopian, as soon as he was made to understand fully the meaning of the Gospel message, requested to be baptized, and without any recorded emotional excitation the baptism was performed and he went on his way rejoicing. Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, heard the Master call, "Follow me," and he immediately followed Him. All these and kindred cases show most conclusively, as does also the extraordinary case of the Apostle Paul, himself, that there is no particular kind of emotional experience required or taught in the New Testament. It is well to get this clearly and definitely before our minds. There is not one word said in the Bible, either directly or indirectly, of the necessity of having any particular kind of experience or of having any striking "witness of the spirit," or of having the striking proof of the "power," or even of having any state of feeling at all. This is surely significant. There is much said of the necessity of faith and of the importance of following the Master and of the absolute need of implicit trust in God. But as Mr. Moody himself says: "The Bible does not say that he that feeleth or he that feeleth and believeth hath everlasting life, nothing of the kind; it is always, 'He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.'"

Neither do the great Protestant Reformers who ushered in the great Protestant Reformation teach any special type of experience as necessary in conversion. These men were powerful religious leaders themselves and labored under the stress of strong religious excitement and ferment. And they might have been excused for some extravagance on this point. And indeed the intrepid Luther himself had striking religious experiences, even to the extent of seeing the Tempter himself in bodily form. Yet nowhere did any of them lay any burden upon their followers by prescribing a definite or specific kind of religious experience as necessary to the spiritual life. These mighty interpreters of the new religious spirit ushered in by

the Reformation preached most strongly and most profoundly upon the cardinal doctrines of faith in God, of the saving influence of the Gospel and of the value of supreme trust in the wisdom, love, and mercy of a kind Heavenly Father. True they also spoke of Christian experience and of the quiet and comforting assurance that comes through complete surrender to the will of God; but nowhere in their voluminous writings can these pioneers of the Protestant Reformation be cited in proof of a theory of conversion which emphasizes the emotional element and insists on any striking states of feeling as essential to the regenerated state. They say nothing of conversion by feeling, or of a witness of the spirit in terms of emotion. It is faith, trust, self-surrender, Christian life, and Christian service.

The same testimony may be cited concerning the teaching of the great modern revivalists: John Wesley, Geo. Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody. Thousands and tens of thousands of souls were converted under the preaching of these mighty men of the spirit. And it is also true that under the influence of the powerful religious awakening occasioned by their stirring appeals, men and women frequently fell on the floor as dead, and experienced visions, hallucinations and all kinds of strange subjective experiences. But they never commended these striking manifestations or considered them as necessary to genuine conversion. In fact, these phenomena gave Wesley no little concern at times, and Jonathan Edwards recognized that they could be imitated and even brought about by Satanic influences, and hence he set no value upon them. Dwight L. Moody, the greatest of modern revivalists, while always emphasizing the necessity of conversion and of Christian certainty, and insisting not only on the possibility, but on the reality of instantaneous conversion, frequently cautions his hearers not to build on their feelings or to trust on their emotional states, but to put their entire faith on "Him, who is the way, the truth and the life." He uses these apt words, "Now we have power to see and to hear, and we also have power to believe. It is all folly for inquirers to take the ground that they cannot believe. They can if they will. But the trouble with most people is



that they have confounded feeling with believing. Now feeling has nothing whatsoever to do with believing. The Bible does not say: He that feeleth or he that feeleth and believeth hath everlasting life. Nothing of the kind. But it does say and say distinctly: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment!'

It is important to take these things seriously to heart so that we may have a clear and definite understanding of the rightful place of the feelings in the religious life. The feelings are not to be cultivated for their own sakes. Lofty states of religious emotion may have no value at all and they may be evidences of profound religious influences at work. They may be manufactured, and therefore lack genuineness, or they may be spontaneous and carry with them some measure of religious worth. A man's state of religion cannot and must not be measured by the degree and intensity of his religious experience. He may have strong feelings and be really unregenerated at heart. He may have relatively little religious emotion and may be one of the world's great saints. The inquiring sinner should not begin with an analysis of his feelings. He must address himself resolutely to the subject of his moral attitude, which needs reorganization and regeneration. The young convert should not rely upon the unstable condition of his post-conversion feelings, for these will leave him frequently in doubt and uncertainty as to his real spiritual condition. Feelings will come and feelings will go, but they are not the measure of one's moral worth, nor do they mark stages in one's spiritual progress. As loving witnesses of the spirit's presence in our lives they are to be welcomed if they come. But absence of religious emotion in a more or less pronounced form is not a proof sufficient of an imperfect moral state. This lack may be accounted for by temperament, by physical condition, by a state of health. No! Feelings must not be made the criterion of moral worth. That would be like building upon the sand.

"Who, then, is the Christian in his emotional life? He is not to be recognized by his ecstatic utterances or turbulent repentances

or demonstrations of passionate affection for a visualized Christ. These states of feeling may be the best expression of the Christian character, or may, on the other hand, have no moral significance. Christian emotion is an instrument of Christian consecration. The Christian has his exalted moments of emotional communion with God, like those in which Jesus said, 'All things have been delivered unto me by my Father;' but these moments of vision rise out of valleys of common duty-doing, as when Jesus, in the same passage, said to the weary and heavy-laden, 'I will give you rest.' The Christian, like his Master, has his mount of transfigured feeling; but at its foot waits the life of service, as Jesus went down to heal the demoniac boy. The Christian is touched by the feeling of compassion; but it is a conscientious and continuous compassion, as when the Samaritan set the sufferer on his own beast and took care of him. Behind Christian feeling, stands Christian thoughtfulness; behind Christian passion, power in reserve. The emotions are not superficial agitations of nervous excitement, like little waves tossed up by a passing steamer with its churning wheels; they are the crests that lift themselves when the depths of nature are stirred, and the whole character is lifted, like a heaving roller, to the surface of life." Thus Prof. Peabody characterizes the Christian in his emotional life. It is a life that is tinged with emotions of a chastened self-restraint and of an unselfish service.

## 2. "Visions," "Voices," "Trances," and the Like not Essential to Christian Experience.

Some people have an idea that some striking manifestation of divine power in the form of "visions," voices," "dreams," or the like is necessary for genuine conversion. But such phenomena have necessarily no religious significance. They are easily explained and are of frequent occurrence, not only in religious excitement, but also in times of high fever, great bodily weakness or nervous derangement. It is comparatively easy for the human mind under normal conditions "to see" objects with the mind's eye, or "to hear" voices and sounds with the

mind's ear. With the aid of a good memory or of a vivid imagination, we can readily reproduce the experiences of our younger days. We can see the old homestead, the familiar scenes of play and toil, the faces of friends and loved ones; or we can hear voices of parents or playmates long since silent in death, with the vividness and reality almost of real life. A retentive memory and a lively imagination not only enable us to recall very vividly past scenes and experiences, but also to conjure up new scenes and surroundings, to see new sights, to hear strange voices, and to live in a new world of our own making. Our "day dreams" are sometimes strikingly real and life-like. What we think about most frequently and most intently, makes the deepest impression upon our minds and, therefore, furnishes the best material for day dreams, or night dreams either.

In times of sickness or nervous disorder or religious excitement, our imaginations are stirred to unusual activity, and hence the greater frequency and vividness of pictures, sights, voices, dreams, and like phenomena. A good ministerial brother told me not long since that, during a period of great nervous depression, he had several most striking "visions" of the glory of heaven and the dazzling splendor of angels and heard most beautiful strains of heavenly music. But the good brother attributed no special significance to the "vision," because he was subject at the time to spells of nervous weakness and disorder. A young girl of fifteen, during an attack of fever and under the influence of extraordinary nervous excitement, not many years ago, heard the voice of an angel, and received comforting messages of hope and encouragement to members of the family, under circumstances of the greatest impressiveness. For hours at a time she spoke incessantly of the beautiful heavenly sights that she saw and of the wondrously sweet and delightful music which she heard in her delirium. All these things seemed very real at the time, but to-day there is not a vestige left in the memory of the young lady. The history of nervous disorders through sickness, fever or bodily weakness of some kind or other, is full of such strange phenomena, some of which may have moral

or religious significance, but not necessarily so. The spirit may operate in such ways, but they are surely not the normal methods of its activity.

On similar grounds, and for similar reasons, the striking religious experiences of many religious leaders may be explained. Under strong religious excitement, and as a result of prolonged intense thought on certain religious subjects, as for instance, God, Heaven, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, or a personal devil, the mind may conceive of these realities in a most vivid and impressive manner. Thus Paul "saw a light" and "heard a voice," Augustine heard a "voice." Luther saw the bodily form of the Tempter, and hurled his ink bottle at him, whereupon he fled. Charles G. Finney saw his Saviour stand before him transformed. Some of the monks of the Middle Ages had most remarkable experiences of this kind. And not infrequently, and for similar reasons, some of the converts of our own time, have lively experiences of "visions" and "voices." They may behold glimpses of the glories of Heaven. They may see their blessed Redeemer with the marks of nails in His hands and in His feet; they may hear voices of angels, or of loved ones long since departed. They may have verses of Scripture impressed upon their minds. They may behold beautiful forms of spiritual beings, or ugly, terrifying forms of evil spirits, and possibly hear the sound of intelligible voices, either of comfort or of warning. All these things and many others of a similar character, are of frequent occurrence with certain emotional natures, and under certain mental and physical conditions.

But no special spiritual significance must be attributed to most of these striking experiences. They may have some spiritual value and they may be utterly void of spiritual meaning. They may be of the nature of a delusion, or of an hallucination. They may come with deep religious thought and feeling, and they may come as the result of nervous disorders or of narcotic stimulation. The man who is religiously intoxicated and the man who is alcoholically intoxicated may have similar experiences of delusion and hallucination, and the one may have just about as much spiritual value as the other. The point to be remembered

is that these cases of hallucination, of automatism, of special "sights" and "voices," belong almost invariably to the emotional temperament, and to this temperament only. These special experiences are not prescribed by Scripture; they are incapable of being experienced by certain temperaments, and they are not essential to conversion or even to normal Christian experience. When we hear emotional enthusiasts, therefore, testify of their remarkable experiences of heavenly visions or of terrifying shapes and forms of the evil one, and when we observe how they glory in these things as being seemingly superior manifestations of divine favor, then we know how to make due allowances. These phenomena are not to be sought for their own sakes. They are not to be regarded as special tokens of divine favor. They may have much or little spiritual meaning or none at all. They may be counterfeited and imitated by the devil, as Jonathan Edwards claims, and hence cannot be considered as tokens of a superior spiritual state or signs of divine power. They are absolutely worthless as evidences of conversion, or as tokens of divine favor, unless we know their origin and are sure of their genuineness. As Professor James puts it: "The super-normal incidents, such as voices, visions and overpowering impressions of the meaning of suddenly presented Scripture texts, the melting emotions and tumultuous affections connected with the crisis of change, may all come by way of nature, or worse still, be counterfeited by Satan. The real witness of the spirit to the second birth is to be found only in the disposition of the genuine child of God, the permanently patient heart, the love of self eradicated."

### **3. The so-called "Power" and Religious "Ecstasy" not Essential.**

Among the denominations which lay great stress upon emotional experiences in conversion, the so-called "power" is frequently considered as a test or proof of conversion. It is often urged by religious enthusiasts of this extreme type that every human soul must pass through a peculiar, striking and abrupt kind of emotional experience, which is characterized by such

terms as the "power," "getting happy," and "getting religion," or "finding peace," before it can be considered in a state of grace. According to this doctrine, so prevalent among the emotional religionists of the Methodist, Evangelical and other denominations of the revival type of conversion, there is only one entrance to the Kingdom, and that is through the gate of emotional revolution and chaos; there is only one method of salvation, and that is the one of the "anxious bench," the protracted meeting, the religious frenzy and the so-called "power;" there is only one possible condition of discipleship, and that is through tumultuous disturbances of the religious feelings, and through violent emotional frenzy, resulting in a "witness of the spirit," with power, and in uncontrollable movements of the body, such as shouting, clapping of hands, jumping, convulsions, often ending in a dead swoon as the climax. These violent and abrupt emotional experiences are supposed to be the results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and as necessary and indispensable conditions for membership to Christ's spiritual kingdom, in spite of the fact that Jesus himself said not one word in justification of such an arbitrary and unreasonable doctrine. Such extreme emotional enthusiasts stoutly maintain that the denominations which conduct an orderly and dignified type of religious service that appeals to the intelligence and the reason are "dead churches;" that members of such denominations, whose religion consists not in empty profession or in vulgar and uncharitable criticisms of others, but in a quiet, earnest life of love and service, are "icicles" or "unconverted" or "children of the devil;" and that the places of public worship where religious services are conducted with dignified feeling and a chastened restraint of the emotions are "refrigerators," or "cemeteries," or places where the children of wrath are lulled to sleep and made comfortable and satisfied in their state of "unregeneration." For such extreme and unthinking religionists, pious noise and confusion take the place of thought and intelligence; emotional effervescence and froth, that of reason and judgment; religious fervor and ecstasy, that of calmness of the soul and benevolence of will. The greatest saints, according to this conception of conversion, are those who have

the most frequent experiences of the "power" or who can make the loudest professions or indulge in the most violent and boisterous demonstrations of religion in prayers or testimony, however empty the head, or unchanged the heart, or inconsistent and unfruitful the life may be. It were laughable, if it were not pitiful and pathetic, that such crude and unscriptural conceptions of religion still find adherents and advocates in our own day and generation, much to the pity and disgust of all intelligent and reasonable disciples of the Master, who seek to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, not in "word," neither in "tongue," but "in deed and in truth," and who delight to worship the Lord their God, who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth."

When one hears of such performances one is reminded of the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, and the two types of religious service contrasted in that strange and interesting account. The prophets of Baal were loud and boisterous; they called on the name of Baal "from morning even until noon," "O Baal, hear us;" they "leaped" upon the altar; they "cried aloud;" they "cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets," with the hope that thereby they might "compel" their god to hear; they were told by Elijah in a taunting manner to cry louder and louder for fear their god might be absent from home, or engaged in conversation, or even asleep, and hence "must be waked up." This is not an altogether inappropriate description of the method of conducting religious services in some localities to-day. One is tempted to ask whether it can be possible that our God may at times be off on a journey, or engaged in conversation, or possibly be even asleep, when it is deemed necessary by some of the perfervid types of religionists in our enlightened times to cry aloud to God with all the intensity and volume of which the human voice is capable, to "leap" as it were, upon the altar, to "cry aloud" unceasingly and in unison, lest God might not hear, and to "cut themselves," as it were, with spiritual implements of torture, that they might thereby "compel" the Lord their God to have mercy upon them, and to lend an unwilling ear to their passionate appeals. How different the quiet, assuring faith of an Elijah, who came "at the time of the

offering of the evening sacrifice," with his people, before the Most High, in quietness of spirit, and with assurance born of implicit faith and trust in God, and lifted up his voice to Heaven with the petition: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God." And the Lord God hearkened and heard the simple prayer of Elijah with the result that "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

The religious services conducted in some localities and among some emotional enthusiasts in our day, with its accompaniments of confusion, boisterous and unrestrained explosions of religious feeling, with its "crying aloud" from morning even until noon, or from evening until midnight, its "leaping" upon the altar and its self-torture, to the end that religious frenzy and the "power" may be produced, may not have more religious value in the sight of God than the emotional and irrational performances of the prophets of Baal. Religious frenzy thus produced may have some religious value, and it may be absolutely immoral in its expression, and an abomination in the sight of God. If the mistaken and deluded promoters of this kind of religious hysteria and emotional frenzy would only know the real origin of such phenomena, they would not attribute so much spiritual significance to them. In various forms, such states of religious frenzy have appeared and reappeared throughout the history of religion. Examples of such strange and violent religious experiences are found "in the sacred frenzy of the Bacchantes, the trance of the sibyls, the ecstasy of the Neo-Platonists, the enlightenment that came to Buddha under the sacred Bo-tree, the visions of the canonized saints, the absorption into God experienced by various mystics, the religious epidemics of the Middle Ages," and the wild and frenzied experiences of the American Indians during the excitement of their religious dances. It is manifestly not a "Christian" experience. "The religious history of humanity," as Professor Bowne has said, "quite apart from Christianity, is full of strange and abnormal experiences, which are supposed to be peculiarly religious. Mohammedanism and Hinduism abound



in phenomena of this sort. They are even possible on the purely physiological plane through the influence of alcohol and anæsthetics and narcotics."

A good Christian brother recently assured me that the reason for some strange and unusual religious experiences of his was the power of the Holy Ghost in his soul. And the vividness and strangeness of his religious experience need not be doubted. But to attribute all such strange and abnormal emotional experiences to the agency of the Holy Ghost is to misunderstand and confuse the nature and origin of religious emotions. When we know such unusual experiences as trances, visions, voices, catalepsy and the "power" have been experienced in all ages of the world, by heathen Greeks, by fanatical Mohammedans, by dreamy Buddhists, and by savage and uncivilized American Indians, as well as by religious enthusiasts and emotional religionists of the Christian church in all ages, then we must seek some other explanation than the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may be present in some of these strange religious phenomena, but He is most assuredly not the sole cause or origin of them, or else we must assume His activity as being lawless and arbitrary and not limited to the time and people of the Christian dispensation. And when we know further that these same unusual phenomena, like the "power," may be experienced by men under the influence of liquor, or other stimulants, or may be produced by absolutely unspiritual and even unmoral conditions, and with physical stimuli, as has been demonstrated again and again, then we must be careful in attributing every religious phenomena of this sort to the Holy Ghost. A great many sins have been committed in the name of the Holy Ghost. "Under the influence of religious excitement there occurs," as Professor Coe says, "a sporadic case of hallucination, or of motor automatism, or of autohypnotism, taking the form of trance, vision, voices or catalepsy." This is the simple explanation of the "power" and similar religious phenomena. That they have no religious significance whatsoever, no one would want to assert. To claim that such experiences are necessary or essential to conversion or sane religious

perience would be absurd and ridiculous. They have their origin in an emotional temperament, they are fostered and produced by strong religious excitement and they are frequently accompanied by the most disgusting performances. To attribute such lawless and abnormal experiences to the agency of the Holy Ghost is an insult to true religion, and a reflection upon the sanity and intelligence of God's Holy Spirit.

It is pathetic to think that there are still Christian communities and Christian churches among us at the present time, whose chief aim seems to be to foster this unhealthy and abnormal types of religious experience. It is really pitiful that sincere Christian men and women can find it in their hearts to encourage and propagate a form of emotional frenzy and of religious intoxication which is absolutely unwarranted by Scripture, and contrary to reason and intelligence. What excesses have been committed in the name of religion! And to insist that all souls shall be obliged to enter the Kingdom by the method of emotional conversion and the so-called "power" is to do violence to many a sensitive religious nature, and to cause it unnecessary suffering and agony. To make it possible for every emotional nature to respond violently to religious influences requires a process of religious excitement and ferment, and a period of more or less protracted emotional agitation altogether uncalled for in Scripture. And to work for striking emotional experiences and confidently to expect them is to seek "signs and wonders," which expectation Jesus condemned in the Jews. To cultivate the religious feelings, and to stir them up excessively and unduly for the mere pleasure of "enjoying religion" is a form of religious dissipation which is no less disastrous than many other forms of excessive indulgence. The religious feelings were given us that they might serve the higher and nobler ends of reverence, of worship, of religious thoughtfulness and of Christian charity. There is a physical debauchery by overindulgence in stimulants. There is a religious debauchery by overindulgence in religious stimulants which is absolutely unmoral and dangerous. The flabby kind of character and the low standard of morals produced by excessive indulgence in

emotionalism in religion is only too manifest where this type of religion flourishes. To magnify the feelings in religion is to subvert the moral standards. To indulge the religious emotions excessively to the neglect of the intelligence and the will is liable to foster the kind of ethical standards of the negro type which regards it justifiable to rob the chicken coop or the melon patch so long as you are not detected. The greatest saint of the emotional type, with most frequent attacks of the "power," and with the loudest professions of loyalty to Christ, is not infrequently the most dubious and crooked in his business transactions. Unduly to indulge the emotions in religion is to allow the moral forces to evaporate in "heat and smoke," and leave the moral fibres flabby and the moral standards erratic. This is the most charitable explanation of the fact that practically all business men of all religious denominations expect more business honesty and business integrity at the hands of the worldly and the non-professors of religion, than they do of many of the extreme types of emotionalism in religion, whose religion too frequently consists only in pious professions and whose professions too often belie their ordinary daily conduct and life. "By their *fruits* ye shall know them," not by their professions.

Excessive emotionalism in religion is to be looked upon with distrust and disfavor. "Nothing could be more exaggerated," says Peabody in his "Religion of an Educated Man," "than to regard the ecstasies and fevers, the earthquakes and volcanoes of spiritual experience as normal aspects of the religious life. Under such a view, religion would not be a form of health and sanity, but a form of intoxication or fever, *and the religious life, intermittent, spasmodic, hysterical, must fail to command the rational confidence of an educated man.* These abnormal incidents, these volcanic eruptions, in fact, make more impressive the orderliness and continuity which mark the normal condition of the spiritual life. The religious nature is no more abnormal and revolutionary than the physical or intellectual life of man. It is not a scene of catastrophes and pathological excesses, but of a silent process of evolution and education, of expansion, progress and growth."

#### 4. **The Spirit of Over-Confidence and of Self-Satisfaction not Essential.**

It is not necessary for genuine Christian experience that a believer should be over-confident of his true spiritual state or self-satisfied with his Christian attainments. In fact, too great assurance of one's spiritual excellence is only too frequently a sure indication of self-deception or of hypocrisy. It behooves the earnest Christian disciple to speak of his spiritual states and achievements in the language of moderation and self-restraint. It is very true that a disciple of the Master should be sure of his attitude of loyalty and of devotion, but he is not called upon to be over-confident or boastful. Too great confidence begets spiritual pride, and spiritual pride, we are told, goeth before a fall. When Peter was most confident in his assertion, "Though all should forsake thee and leave thee, yet will not I," he was on the very brink of his great denial of the Master. We may well rejoice in our spiritual redemption and in the evidences of God's goodness and mercy to us, but the knowledge of our many shortcomings and of our imperfections should make us distrustful of our own strength and dissatisfied with our own spiritual attainments. An earnest seeker after spiritual excellence is profoundly grateful, on the one hand, for numberless tokens of divine help and favor received, and, on the other hand, deeply grieved and humiliated over the consciousness that his life has not been as "fruitful" and his spiritual progress not as rapid as might have been expected. A true knowledge of one's spiritual shortcomings and weaknesses should lead to spiritual meekness and humility and not to spiritual pride and self-righteousness.

One of the deplorable results of emotionalism in religion is the tendency, on the part of the more excitable natures, to boastful over-confidence and to pharisaical self-righteousness. A truly converted man ought to be possessed of the spirit of meekness and humility, but quite the opposite is frequently true of the converts of emotional revivalism. This tendency to self-exaltation in religious matters must have been prevalent in

the days of the great revival under Jonathan Edwards, for he writes about it after this fashion: "It is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints and their affections gracious, because the affections they have are attended with an exceeding confidence that their state is good and their affections divine." Edwards contends that such boastful professions as the following, "I know certainly that God is my Father," "I know so surely that I shall go to heaven as if I were there," "I know that God is now manifesting Himself to my soul and is now smiling upon me," "I know that I am in a state of sinlessness and am thankful that 'I am not as other men are,'" and others of like character so often heard by over-confident professors of religion, are to be attributed to an "overbearing, high-handed and violent sort of confidence," which has not the countenance of "true Christian assurance," but savors of the "spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted that they were the most eminent saints" to be found anywhere.

It is almost inconceivable that a truly penitent soul, who professes to be a follower of the meek and "lowly Jesus," should find it in his heart, as is so frequently the case, to rejoice in his own superior goodness and virtue, to sit in judgment upon the religious state of others, and to condemn them indiscriminately to "outer darkness" and utter hopelessness, to speak boastfully and sacrilegiously of favored "glimpses into heaven" and of who was seen there, and who was not seen there, to the disparagement of members of other shades of belief and practice, and to proclaim in flippant and irreverent tones of familiarity with God, his spiritual attitude of pharisaical pride: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even as this publican." Did not Christ tell us, "Judge not that ye be not judged"? Are we not told, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased"? Did not our Master warn us against harsh criticism when He said: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye"? Are we not assured that the "meek" shall inherit the earth and that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble"? Not every one that saith,

"Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Neither will people be heard necessarily for their much-speaking or for their loud professions. "Many will say unto me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23. Is it not possible that Christ will say to some of these mistaken, but over-confident zealots of religion, when they shall come to Him for approval, saying: "Lord, Lord, did we not make 'loud professions' in Thy name? Did we not make long public prayers and offer much self-laudatory testimony in Thy name? Did we not speak of the glories of heaven and of its membership limited to Thy chosen few among the praying saints of the earth in Thy name? And did we not, in Thy name, extol ourselves as the 'Lord's elect,' and condemn the 'sheep' not of our fold to hopeless despair?" I say, is it not possible that Christ will say to some of these: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

One of the first requisites of the "new life" is Christian meekness and humility. "Blessed are the meek," not the proud, or boastful, or self-confident. "Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*: for I am *meek and lowly in heart*." Matthew 11:29. Christ himself was meek and lowly in spirit and He wants His followers to *learn of Him* in this respect, that they may inherit the kingdom. To be sure, not all meekness and humbleness of mind is a sign of true conversion. But the absence of meekness and Christlike humility is most assuredly an infallible sign of spiritual pride, or of carnal self-satisfaction. The followers of the meek and "lowly" Jesus must themselves, in their own words and deeds, show forth the spirit of true meekness and of Christian charity. "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity *vaunteth not* itself, is *not easily puffed up*, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, *thinketh no evil*."

It is a most impressive fact that Christ's strongest condemnation of sinners fell not upon the worldly, the careless or

indifferent, nor upon the adulterers, the betrayers and the profligates, but upon the spiritual pride and self-righteousness of the Pharisees. For the worldly and the abandoned there was hope, because they realized their unworthiness. For the self-satisfied Pharisees, who were sufficient unto themselves, there was little hope of spiritual improvement, because they lacked the necessary spiritual hunger and the spiritual thirst, without which they could not be "filled." Jesus was glad to receive all sorts and conditions of men that He might minister unto them. But the Pharisees, who "loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets," were satisfied with their spiritual states, and consequently they did not come to Christ with hungry souls so that He might minister unto them and refresh them spiritually. They were absolutely sure of their moral superiority. They did not fail to talk much of their spiritual attainments. They loved the "uppermost rooms" at religious gatherings and the "chief seats" in the synagogues. They did "all their works to be seen of men," and for a pretense "made long prayers" in the hearing of men, thinking that they would be "heard for their much-speaking." Because of their spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, Christ was unable to reach them or to minister unto them out of His fulness. And hence His unmeasured terms of scathing rebuke: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And it is this spirit of self-sufficiency and of moral superiority which makes the modern representatives of the Pharisees of old such "hopeless" cases for spiritual improvement. It is their self-sufficiency, their unteachableness, their self-complacency which smites the heart of Jesus with their hopelessness to-day. They lack the "teachableness," the open-mindedness, the spiritual humility of children, so necessary for membership to Christ's spiritual tutelage. And well might it be said of these modern Pharisees, who love to make a display of their religion, and who are constrained to stand in "the chief seats" of our modern synagogues and to pray: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as these 'publicans,'" except ye be "converted" from your spiritual pride and self-satisfaction and "become as little children" in teachableness, in humility, and in

simplicity of faith, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

President Hyde has this to say on the pride of the Pharisee, and the conceit of the perfectionist: "Of all the monstrosities that misdirected and shortsighted spiritual effort has produced, this *self-righteousness* of a loveless legalism is the most repellent. People of this type commit, perhaps, few overt acts of flagrant indiscretion, but they rise to no lofty heights of heroic righteousness. They manage to keep their precious souls just out of the hell of social reprobation they are afraid of; but they never come in sight of the shining battlements of heaven. They may not cheat you; but you must not expect them to make a costly sacrifice in your behalf. They may not get drunk; but their homes are not so happy that their children and neighbors find it preferable to the saloon. They may not commit adultery, or risk the scandal of a divorce; but marriage is not to them a sacrament of self-devotion. They may not tell many lies; but they seldom speak the truth with gentleness or refrain from peddling scandal out of thoughtfulness and kindly consideration. They may not break the Sabbath; but no one who has to spend it with them likes to see the dreadful day come around. They may not swear themselves; but they are so prim and punctilious in their propriety, that they make the people who see them want to. The man who fancies he has kept the whole law of God, and *prides himself upon it*, merely shows how incapable he is of appreciating the infinite breadth of service and depth of sympathy the real keeping of the divine law would involve."

Verily, too much confidence in one's spiritual attainments is not essential to true Christian experience. On the contrary, too great positiveness is a pretty sure indication of self-deception or spiritual pride. Genuine spiritual excellence leads to modesty and humility of spirit. The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart. The earnest seeker after God does indeed rejoice that God has done so much for him, but he is also deeply grieved over the fact that he has done so little for God. The true penitent verily knows that he has passed from death unto life, and that he is now on the road to heaven and immortality, but he also



realizes most keenly that his progress in true Christian self-control and in the formation of a Christlike character has been painfully slow. He is made extremely happy in the realization of what has already been accomplished in his spiritual education; but he is also profoundly impressed with the greatness and seriousness of the task still to be accomplished. A true knowledge of the greatness of God's grace in his redemption, makes the honest believer feel like saying with Paul: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." A full realization of what is involved in "fighting the good fight of faith," makes him cry out with the apostle: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." An earnest, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ is constrained to be truly humble and distrustful of his own spiritual worth in comparison with the holy and spotless character of Jesus Christ, his Example and Leader and Guide. And hence his prayer is better expressed in the spirit and words of the publican: "God, be merciful to me a sinner," than in the boastful and self-satisfied utterance of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican."

He that is down need fear no fall,  
 He that is low no pride;  
 He that is humble ever shall  
 Have God to be his Guide.

## IV. What is Essential in Religious Experience.

### 1. The Right Attitude of the Will is Essential.

As in ethics, so in religion, the right attitude of the will is all-important. The undue emphasis placed upon the feelings and the great prominence they assume in emotional conversion has given the will a less prominent place than it deserves in the sphere of religion. In all other human relations and interests we

ask for the purpose or the intention underlying an act. If the intention is good, we say the act is a good act. If the purpose is sinister or the intention is bad, we call the act a bad act, however strongly it may flavor of the spirit of charity. In courts of law, in the interpretation of the fundamental principles which govern conduct, men seek to get at the purpose or intention of an act, so that they may judge properly of its inherent moral value. Not the act so much as the purpose back of it determines the guilt or innocence of an accused man in a court of law or before the bar of public opinion. We are applying this principle continually in our attempts to judge the conduct of our fellow-men. We always seek for the intention. We make ample allowances for blundering actions, provided the intention was good. We judge harshly and severely the seemingly correct conduct of a man whose principles and purposes of life are known to be false and selfish. Why should not the same standards obtain in the religious sphere of life?

What is sin? What is goodness? What makes us culpable before God or acceptable in His sight? Holiness is in the heart, in the consciously right attitude towards God and man, in the "benevolent will," as Fairchild would say. "Sin is the transgression of the law." But this implies purpose or intention or else it could not be voluntary transgression. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The knowing to do a right thing and refusing to do it involves an attitude of the will. It is sin, a sin of omission. There are sins of omission and sins of commission, but they have the same source in the human will. The prodigal's sin consisted in his deliberate choice to "ask for the goods" that did not belong to him. His salvation dawned when he came to himself and said, "I will arise." Here was the turning point. When he pulled himself together and gathered up the tattered fragments of his moral nature together in one supreme resolution of his sovereign will, involved in the words: "I will arise and go to my father and I will say, father I have sinned," then the all-important act of his redemption was done, so far as his part of the transaction was concerned. The rest all followed as a logical outcome of his new

attitude, which crystallized in the critical moment in which, under the influence of God's spirit, he asserted his sovereign right of benevolent choice and resolved henceforth to surrender his will to the will of his heavenly Father. And this is invariably the view of the Bible. And it is preëminently the view of Jesus.

It is a striking fact that all the conditions laid down by our Master for entrance into His kingdom imply a distinct and unmistakable element of conscious will-power. When the jailer at Philippi asked Paul that all-important question, "What must I do to be saved," the reply was: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." So Jesus told his disciples: "*He that believeth on the Son hath* everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." John 3:36. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is here made the one condition of salvation. Jesus addressed the woman, who came that she might but touch the "hem of his garment" and be cured, as follows: "Daughter, be of good cheer, *thy faith hath made thee whole.*" Matthew 9:22. And Paul tells the Romans: "A man is justified by faith." And again: "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26. The words "faith" and "believe" occur more frequently in the Bible, as necessary conditions of heart for salvation, than any other expressions which can be found. It is "through faith" in Christ Jesus that we are saved. And this "saving faith" implies an active outreaching of the human heart, through a conscious effort on the part of the soul towards the object of its faith, namely, Jesus Christ and His redeeming love. The most prominent element in the "saving faith" mentioned in the Bible is that of a conscious, voluntary movement of the human will towards something outside of itself. A living faith is an active faith, not a passive one; a voluntary outgoing of the soul, not a passive state of collapse and inefficiency. And hence, the faith which maketh whole, which moves men's lives and influences them powerfully for good is a positive, deliberate attitude of the human will in its reaching out towards the Divine for strength and help. The same element of voluntary attitude is implied in all the other terms of Scripture used for conversion, for regeneration or for the conditions of the new life. To "cease

to do evil" and "learn to do well," to "put off the old man" and to "put on the new man," to "arise" and go to the Father, to "follow" Jesus in a life of love and service, to "believe," to "trust," to "give" one's heart in self-surrender, to "love" the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves, to "choose" the better part, to "do" the will of God, to "hunger and thirst" after righteousness, to be "meek" and "lowly in spirit," to "have the mind" of the Master, to "sit" at the feet of Jesus, to "accept" the invitation to the marriage feast, to "build" one's house upon the rock, these and similar expressions imply a deliberate and positive attitude of the will in conscious choice and active effort. It is an impressive fact to note that not a single condition for the spiritual life mentioned in the Bible is in terms of feeling or emotion, but always and invariably in terms of conscious, self-directing, voluntary effort on the part of the sovereign will towards righteous and benevolent ends. This is strikingly illustrated in the teaching and example of our Master himself, who came to do the "will of God" and who found His highest expression of obedience and submission in His prayer, "Not my will but Thine, be done."

Jesus appeals to the intellect and to the will. It was His knowledge of God which gave Him power-tranquility, "He that knoweth the Son knoweth the Father." "And this is life everlasting to know thee as the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent into the world," says Jesus, in John 17:3. He expects from men a moral initiative. "Follow me," He says. "Sell all that thou hast and follow me." "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:35. This is a matter of choice. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And so Jesus says about himself: "Not my will but thine, be done." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." John 4:34. The dominant factor both in his experience and in his teaching is not intellectual achievement or emotional exaltation, but ethical decision. So again Jesus says: "He that willeth to do the will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes the doing of his will, not the mere profession, "Lord, Lord," the test of discipleship:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:21. And in Revelation we have the sweeping invitation: "Whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. The emphasis is on the willingness to yield obedience and to do the will of God. "First obedience, then insight: first decision, then precision; first the following of Jesus, then later the understanding of Him, such is the sequence of Christian experience," as Prof. Peabody so well says. "Among the baffling truths, which invite and defy reason and the tides of feeling which rise only to fall, the beginnings of Christian experience are, according to the teaching of Jesus, in the conversion of the will.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

It is disheartening to see the essential condition for discipleship expressed so often and so persistently in terms of intellectual belief or of emotional states or of simple acts or deeds, whereas Jesus himself gave abundant recognition to the supremacy of the will. "Systems of theology have been devised in which every virtue is ascribed to God except that of simple goodness, and every hope offered to men except that of moral choice." Too often the attitude of the Christian leaders has been that "dogma is more than obedience and feeling more than righteousness." Christian discipleship begins where all moral excellence begins, in the dedication of the will to God. "The first demand of Jesus is not for orthodoxy or ecstasy, but for morality." Seek first the kingdom of God. This is the first article of Christian practice. The first step in the process of discipleship is in the resolution to do the will of God.

"One ship drives east and the other drives west  
With the self-same winds that blow;  
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales,  
Which tells us the way they go.

Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate  
 As we voyage along through life;  
*'Tis the set of the soul* that decides its goal  
 And not the calm or the strife."

And so it is "the set of the will" that determines not only the course of the ship but also the character of the haven reached at last. He who sets his will resolutely and supremely for the moral haven desired will ultimately reach the goal, whatever the currents may be or however the gales may blow. The moral decision is the first and most important and all-essential step in the process of conversion. Whatever the feelings may be before the supreme moment of decision or whatever the intellectual attitude, whatever divine influences may have been at work or conflicting personal motives may have been at war in the soul, the sovereign act of conversion culminates in conscious, deliberate and unreserved dedication of the will to God in self-surrender. "The moral decision may be accompanied by a clarifying thought or by an emotional surprise or by both." In fact, intense religious emotion and tumultuous ebullitions of feeling may accompany the fateful decision. But they are not essential. The vessel of Christian character has not indeed reached its port through the initial decision of the will for Christ; but the voyage is begun and by one sharp decisive impulse of the will, the vessel has been launched and received momentum and direction towards its final goal. The continual "set of the sail" will be necessary throughout the voyage, whatever the winds of feeling that blow or the currents of thought that may run counter and impede the progress. May we not all pray the prayer of the poet and dedicate our wills to God's service?

Laid on Thine altar, O my Lord divine,  
 Accept my will this day for Jesus' sake;  
 I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine—  
 Nor any world-proud sacrifice to make;  
 But here I bring, within my trembling hand,  
 This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small.

And Thou alone, O God, canst understand  
 How, when I yield Thee this, I yield mine all!  
 Hidden therein, Thy searching gaze can see  
 Struggles of passion—visions of delight—  
 All that I love, and am, and fain would be,  
 Deep loves, fond hopes, and longings infinite.  
 It has been wet with tears, and dimmed with sighs,  
 Clenched in my grasp, till beauty hath it none—  
 Now, from Thy footstool where it vanquished lies,  
 The prayer ascendeth, "May Thy will be done."  
 Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,  
 And merge it so in Thine own will, that e'en  
 If, in some desperate hour, my cries prevail,  
 And Thou give back my will, it may have been  
 So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,  
 So one with Thee, so filled with peace divine,  
 I may not see, nor know it as my own,  
 But gaining back my will, may find it Thine.

## 2. A Reasonable Degree of Christian Assurance.

With a right moral attitude there comes a reasonable degree of Christian certainty and assurance. The witness of the spirit to our inner states will not be in the amount of feeling we may have in the matter, but in the blessed consciousness that we have given ourselves to God for service. We can surely know our own conscious attitude. We know, for instance, whether we love our parents. This love to parents may be accompanied by a certain amount of pleasurable emotion. But the important consideration is not our states of feeling in the matter, but our conscious attitude of obedience and filial regard. Whether our regard for our parents is highly tinged with lively emotion or is simply a conscious disposition on our part to render them all the faithful service and the kind and loving consideration we can because they are our parents and because we owe them loving obedience and service, matters not. The chief and all-

important thing is that we have this conscious attitude of filial regard which expresses itself in obedient, loving, ungrudging service. And this we can know. We know absolutely whether we have the right attitude towards our parents or not, whether we consciously and intentionally offer them the full measure of filial obedience and of loyal service which we owe them in return for what they are and for what they have done for us. In like manner we may know our attitude towards our heavenly Father. Whether we have come with much fear and trembling, or whether we have come in confidence and assurance, is a small matter. The question is, have we come? And we most assuredly know whether we have come to the Father and we know whether we have surrendered our wills to His will, and we know whether we have rendered Him the full measure of obedience and of loving service which we owe Him for what He is and for what He has done for us. And we may know to a certainty, and beyond the question of a doubt, whether our surrender to Him has been complete or only partial, and whether our inward conscious pledge of obedience and loyalty to His will was made in good faith and without any reservation, fully, unreservedly, unconditionally. I say, we may and can know all these things. It is a matter of certain knowledge, for the mind always knows its own conscious states and acts.

When the young man who was blind from his youth up and who was cured of his blindness by Jesus, as recorded in the ninth chapter of John, was asked what "he thought of Jesus," he replied by saying: "Whether he (Jesus) be a sinner or not, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." This was the test. He had been blind, now he could see. That was an evident fact of which he was certain. He knew it. And so we know whether our eyes have been opened spiritually and whether we can see God in all His loveliness. John tells us that "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." I John 3:14. And again: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us because we love the brethren." I John 3:14. And still once again John writes: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he



has given us." I John 3:24. John tells his hearers that they may know God's presence by the spirit manifested in their lives and by their conscious attitude of love and obedience towards God and towards the brethren. According to John, we may know positively not only that our attitude to God is right, but we may know God's presence within us and the approval of His favor upon us by the consciousness of the spirit of love towards the brethren. We may know our spiritual states in regeneration, not only in being conscious of a right attitude towards God, but also in the consciousness of a benevolent attitude towards our fellow-men in "love to the brethren." A consciousness of "love to the brethren" is, therefore, also proof positive of a right personal relation to God, because real genuine "love to the brethren" comes only from a supreme love to God. And we surely know whether we have a disinterested and unselfish regard for "our brethren." "And this is life everlasting, to know Thee as the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou didst send." John 17:3. These words of Jesus assume a true knowledge of God the Father, and of Jesus the Son as evidence of salvation. To know the love and mercy of God in all its fulness and to know ourselves as voluntarily and deliberately trusting in and relying upon that love, is salvation. This knowledge requires no accompanying states of feeling, no audible witness of the spirit. It is the sort of inner knowledge which maketh not ashamed and which Paul had when he wrote to Timothy: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." II Timothy 1:12.

But some trembling, doubting soul may say: "I want to know positively that I am saved, and how can I know conclusively unless I can feel it powerfully in my heart and have striking proof of it in the promised 'witness of the spirit' in my soul." This expectation of a seemingly supernatural attestation of the spirit is all wrong. There is absolutely no such requirement given in Scripture and no sanction in Christian experience for such expectation. It is true that the witness of the spirit is promised, but this does not necessarily nor usually come with demonstration

of power. A witness in court is not expected to shout his testimony in the feverish language of excitement. A normal witnessing is in calmness of spirit and with composure of manner. As has been said before, God does not love confusion. His spirit may be most clearly and distinctly perceived in quickening and energizing the normal functions of the soul in thought and will and in the deeper, calmer states of subdued and chastened emotion. Not in the earthquake nor in the storm, nor in the fire but in the "still small voice," did Elijah discover the presence of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." No. No. If we have an earnest and sincere desire to abstain from evil and to cleave to that which is good, if we have resolved to commit ourselves to our loving heavenly Father's care and keeping, if we have fully and freely and unreservedly dedicated ourselves to God for unselfish service in His kingdom; and if we have consciously and knowingly resolved to surrender our wayward wills to God's sweet will without any reservation whatsoever, then we may rest assured. And all this we can most decidedly know, and, knowing, rest assured and contented. With such a moral decision there always comes some sense of inner harmony. And there may come rolling in upon the soul feelings of tumultuous joy following the supreme moment of self-surrender or of spiritual reconstruction. But these lofty states of feeling are not to be sought after as "signs" and "wonders," for the seeking after "signs" and "wonders" is what Jesus condemned in the Jews.

In fact, there is great moral danger in the matter of expecting some striking kind of emotional experience during conversion. Many a fearful heart has suffered untold agony because of false and unwarranted expectations of a supernatural witness of the spirit in conversion. This is strikingly illustrated by the testimony of one of Professor Coe's respondents. It is as follows: "They told me to read the Bible and I read it. They told me to pray, and I prayed. They said, 'now all you need to do is to go to the 'mourner's bench,' and ask God to forgive you, and be blessed.' They told me I would know the very instant that He saved me, and that I would know it just as definitely as I knew anything. I went forward night after night,

expecting a sudden reversal of my whole being. The meetings closed. I had no change, no experience." This same person tried it again during a subsequent season of special services with the same unsatisfactory results, until he was almost driven to distraction and despair. This is a typical case. This young man was honest with himself. He could not "feel" any such reversal of his entire being as he was led to believe he could, because he lacked the characteristic emotional temperament. Neither could he deceive himself into believing that he had really experienced a striking conversion when, as a matter of fact, he had not. He was too honest with himself. And the consequence was that for years this honest seeker after God was kept in the darkness of moral despair through no fault of his own, until he was finally led to see that all that was required of him was obedience to the will of God and faith in His love and mercy. After he stopped seeking for "signs" and "wonders" in a striking conversion, and simply yielded his heart to God in loving obedience, he found peace and assurance.

Another testimony runs thus: "I have had a long and bitter experience because of the language used by people at revival meetings. I have striven to come into immediate communion with God, to have a vivid sense of His presence, but that has never been." Professor Coe tells us of young people from among his correspondents who sought a special kind of experience in conversion for twelve years, but never found it. They were kept in moral uncertainty and in spiritual anguish for years because of foolish and unscriptural requirements imposed upon them, which they were not able honestly to meet on account of the lack of the necessary emotional temperament, requisite for brilliant religious experiences. I have known, myself, of people who were made extremely unhappy and miserable for years because they foolishly, but honestly and sincerely, sought through more than one series of special revival services, some striking evidence of the Holy Spirit's witness in the feelings, but which failed to come either because of a lack of the necessary emotional temperament or because of too honest and conscientious a heart to allow deception in the matter.

That most of these honest souls eventually find peace and joy through the "better way" of simple faith and childlike trust in God's precious promises does not alter the fact that such conceptions of conversion are responsible for an immense amount of unnecessary and often cruel spiritual suffering on the part of young and inexperienced seekers after God. Not infrequently these unsuccessful seekers after an arbitrary and abnormal experience in conversion are driven to agnosticism and infidelity. Others again may simply grow cold and indifferent to all religious influences and conclude that all religious experience is a humbug and a delusion. And in more than one instance, some earnest seeker after "signs" and "wonders" in conversion has been so wrought up by religious excitement and so deeply grieved and depressed by a fruitless search after some promised experience of a striking conversion, that the result was either religious melancholy or violent religious insanity. Many a delicate, sensitive soul has been driven to hopeless insanity or to an early grave by reason of the cruel spiritual tortures inflicted because of extreme views of conversion foolishly and unwisely applied without reason or judgment. What shall a person think of a conception of conversion put into practice which requires, on the part of the earnest seeker after God, a protracted period of spiritual agony and unwholesome religious excitement before he may be permitted to taste of the joy of forgiveness? It is a reflection upon God's infinite love and mercy to claim that the courts of heaven must first be stormed by a season of agonizing prayer and religious frenzy before the coveted blessing is permitted to come. God is infinitely more willing to give than we are able to ask or receive. The stubborn will must be broken. The disobedient and wilful soul must yield and run into the loving arms of a merciful Heavenly Father, and then all is over. To seek a special experience of emotional conversion is to seek what God does not require, and what human nature may not always be capable of. To insist that every seeker after God shall work himself up to a certain pitch of religious frenzy that he may have a vivid realization of the "witness of the spirit" with power, before he may be permitted to consider himself a member

of God's spiritual household is "to bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them upon men's shoulders."

What self-torture, agony and spiritual suffering might not be avoided, and what days and weeks and even years of moral uncertainty and hopeless despair might not be prevented if earnest seekers after salvation would only come to God in sincerity and in truth, and yield their hearts and lives to His service and trust His infinite goodness for forgiveness and pardon without any reference to states of feeling to be expected or religious emotions to be enjoyed. John tells us in his Gospel: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power (or the authority or the right) to become the sons of God, to as many as believed in His Name." This is a simple transaction. If the sinner does his part, God will most assuredly do His part. Whoever believes with all his heart in the name of Jesus Christ, has the right to call himself a child of God. Nothing more is required. Nothing extremely difficult and unreasonable is asked of us. No verification is necessary. If we take Jesus Christ into our lives, and allow Him to rule our spirits and to fashion our ideals and purposes, then we may, with confidence and assurance, call ourselves His disciples without any further proof or testimony.

### **3. The Fruits of the Spirit are All-essential.**

The end of all religious life and all religious activity must be the formation of Christian character. The best test of conversion, therefore, and of Christian growth and development must ultimately be in the spirit and character of the lives thus influenced. Neither conversion nor growth are the ends, but character and service. Conversion is only the beginning and Christian experience only the incidents or accompanying states of the process which shall issue in the ripened fruit of a Christlike character. Jesus told his disciples: "By their fruits ye shall know them." A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. If the foundations are well laid and the processes of growth and development are wholesome and sound, then we may look for the proper fruits of Christian

charity. If the planting has been well done and the conditions of growth have been favorable, the fruits must begin to appear in their various manifestations. Whatever the kind of conversion may have been or whatever the character of Christian experience, if the requisite fruits of the spirit are lacking, then there must be something radically wrong. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." A genuine spiritual life, whatever the experience in conversion may have been, will show itself in many and unmistakable ways by its "fruits" of love and service.

Jesus tells us in John 15: "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples." John 15:8. And again: "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." John 15:15. The object and end of discipleship is fruit. To this end Jesus has called and ordained his disciples. Just as the vine-dresser has planted and cultivated his vineyard that he might have fruit, and just as the "sower" went forth to sow that his seed might fall upon good ground and bring forth fruit as a reward for his toil, so Christ himself has planted His spiritual vineyard and sowed His spiritual seed that He might have the fruits of Christian love and Christian character. He puts forth labor upon His spiritual vineyard that it may bring forth more fruit. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it *that it may bring forth more fruit.*" John 15:2. Paul uses the same language in writing to the Romans: "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." Romans 1:13. And again: "The Gospel bringeth forth fruit in you." Colossians 1:6. And again: "That we should bring forth fruit to God." Romans 7:4. Paul also desires an increase of fruit in his followers: "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food and *multiply* your seed sown and *increase* the fruits of your righteousness." II Corinthians 9:10.

The character of the fruit of the spiritual life is beautifully expressed by Paul as follows: "The fruit of the spirit is love,

joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22. This surely is pretty comprehensive and reaches down into the mainsprings of life, the heart of love, and up and out into the manifestations of life as revealed in acts of self-control, meekness, gentleness of spirit, kindness of treatment to our fellow-men, and faithfulness in our relations to both God and man. A conversion that is capable of producing such fruit must be considered a success, whether by a radical change or through gradual growth and development. Jesus came into the world that men might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. Spiritual life as it is found in the life and character of Christ Jesus is an essential fruit of the spirit. Those that have the Son have this life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life." John 5:49. Contact and communion with Jesus, our Master, bring us the spiritual life. And this must be a living contact to be vital, for the same reason that the branch must remain in the vine so as to be fruitful. Living relationship with the source of spiritual life is the requisite for fruitfulness. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." John 15:4. The condition of spiritual fruitfulness is a vital connection with the sources of all spiritual life and spiritual power. With these conditions fulfilled, the fruitfulness will follow as a matter of course: "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." John 15:5. It is a fact of the utmost importance that whatever our process of spiritual regeneration may have been or our Christian experience since conversion, if we have this close and intimate connection with the life and character of our Saviour we shall indeed show forth the fruits of the spirit. And if this vital spiritual relationship is lacking, be our professions ever so earnest or our outward lives ever so correct, or our words ever so full of the appearance of charity, then our lives must remain spiritually unfruitful and barren in the sight of God. "Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels," "though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,"

"though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and have not charity, I am nothing." Professions will not avail, neither will the shadow of godliness: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5: 21.

What are the evidences of conversion as judged by the results of "fruits"? The Lord expects "fruit" in his spiritual vineyard. The character of the fruits of the spirit has been noted. What, now, is the relation of conversion and Christian experience to the matter of Christian fruitfulness? Have conversions of the radical type the largest claim upon us when judged by the standard of Christian fruitfulness? Are the more violent and more extreme types of religious experience in conversion more fruitful of permanent spiritual results than the normal types of simple trust and quiet assurance? If the striking spiritual experience of the emotional type of conversion is the only genuine kind, as some would claim, then manifestly those who have had these brilliant experiences ought to be superior in Christian character or more fruitful in works of love and mercy. If the volcanic religious disturbances found in some extreme cases of emotional conversion are due only to the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, then the effect of such gracious, supernatural activity should be noticeable and permanent. But is such the case? Most assuredly not. Prof. James has these pertinent remarks about the "fruits" of brilliant religious experience: "Well, how is it with the fruits? If we except the class of preëminent saints whose names illumine history and consider only the usual run of saints, the shop-keeping church members, and ordinary youthful or middle-aged recipients of instantaneous conversion, whether at revivals or in the spontaneous course of methodistic growth, you will probably agree that no splendor worthy of a wholly supernatural creature fulgurates from them or sets them apart from the mortals who have never experienced that favor." If a special emotional experience in conversion is indispensable to a genuine Christian life and imparts special gifts and graces to those who are privileged to enjoy such brilliant experiences, then there ought to be tangible evidence of such



unwonted gracious influences in the visible "fruits" of character and conduct. But it would be difficult to discover any such convincing evidence. It surely cannot be claimed that the Christian disciples of the revival type are more fruitful in missionary activity, or more generous in their church benevolences, or more disinterested in their social and political duties or more exemplary in their private and family relationships than those of the non-revival type. And it is equally evident that the members of the non-revival churches, as a class, are just as sincere in their religious professions, just as honest in their business relations, just as exemplary in their personal lives and just as faithful in their social and family duties as the adherents of the revivalistic denominations. If it is impossible to detect any difference in life and conduct between the man who entered the kingdom through a brilliant conversion and the one who came by the more quiet process of growth and development, then we may safely conclude that there is no superior value in brilliant emotional experiences, when judged by the standard of fruits of the spirit in the Christian life and character. If the process of conversion through Christian culture and that of conversion through a radical change produces virtually the same spiritual results, namely, the requisite fruits of the spirit, in the majority of cases, then it is important that we spend less time in discussing the relative merits of different processes of religious growth and development and more time in emphasizing the fruits of the converted life. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Wherever the fruits of the spirit are manifest, there we may be sure of finding the gracious influences of the spirit active.

Jonathan Edwards, the greatest promoter of revivals in Colonial times and the author of the most exhaustive work on the Religious Affections, places the greatest emphasis upon the Christian graces as fruits of the spirit. Earnest believer that he was in the emotional type of conversion, he yet recognized the fact that the real test of the Christian life is after all not in special signs and experiences during conversion, but in the possession of the true spirit of Christ and in the production of the necessary fruits of the Christian life enjoined by the Master. And so he makes

these discriminating remarks as to the evidences of conversion. *It is no sign that a man is or that he is not a converted man,* "if his religious affections are very great or raised very high," so that "they have great effects on the body," or that "those who have these affections are fluent, fervent and abundant in talking of things religious," or that the religious states are accompanied by "texts of Scripture remarkably brought to mind," or that comforts and joys seem to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience in a certain order, or "that persons be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship," or that "persons are led with their mouths to praise and glorify God," or that they have great confidence that what they have experienced "is divine and that they are in a good estate," or that they think they can discern "the good estate of others as though it were immediately revealed from heaven." Edwards stoutly maintains that these various states and dispositions are no sign that a person is a Christian or that he is not a Christian, because they can be imitated and counterfeited by Satan.

On the other hand, according to Edwards, the distinguishing signs of a true spiritual life are such as these: "Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious come from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine," "founded on the loveliness and moral excellency of divine things," "the mind being enlightened richly and spiritually to understand and apprehend divine things," "gracious affections are attended with Evangelical humiliation," "a dove-like spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as it appears in Christ," "a Christian tenderness of spirit," "spiritual appetite and longing after spiritual attainments," "fruits in Christian practice." These and other terms abound in almost every page of Edwards' treatise on the "Religious Affections." These are the evidences and unmistakable signs of true religion. And the greatest of these is "fruits in Christian practice." Edwards continues: "Christian practice is the sign of signs in this sense, that it is the great evidence which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no one grace of the spirit of God but that Christian practice is the most decisive evidence of the truth of

it. It is the proper evidence of repentance. Christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace."

Jesus emphasized the "doing of His will" as the real test of discipleship. He closed His Sermon on the Mount by declaring: "Whosoever *heareth these sayings* of mine and *doeth them* shall be likened unto a man who built his house upon the rock." "And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." Matthew 7:24, 26. Christ came to do his Father's will. And He wants us to do His will and to keep His commandments. And the doing of His will and the keeping of His commandments find expression in Christian conduct. "He that hath the Son hath life." So we may say, he that hath the spirit doeth the works of the spirit. And the reverse is also true. He that doeth not the works of the spirit hath not the spirit and is therefore none of His. And the "fruits of the spirit" are made manifest by living our lives in the spirit of Christ and by rendering our service in His spirit and in His name. Christ's final word of approval is the recognition of services rendered to His children in his name. The words, "Come ye blessed of my Father," were spoken to those who had ministered to Christ through His children. "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger and ye took me in. Naked and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me. I was in prison and ye came unto me." Matthew 25:35, 36. And when those on the right hand claimed no knowledge of having done these things to Jesus, He said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:40. Failure to show the fruits of the spirit in the spirit of the Master was the cause for condemnation to those on the left side. "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have not done it unto me." Matthew 25:41. "And these"—the sluggards and drones in the spiritual kingdom—"shall go away into everlasting punishment," because they failed to produce in their lives the peaceable "fruits" of righteousness in Christian service. Not profession, nor confession, but service is required. "Not every

one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

As we come to the end of our discussion of these serious and important problems, the conviction is forced upon us with ever-increasing impressiveness that the all-essential thing in life is the "spirit" of Jesus Christ himself and the "fruits" of the spirit as revealed in a life of love and service. The possession of the Christ-spirit is the first thing. The entrance to the kingdom is through the gate of simplicity, of trustfulness and of childlike faith. Jesus is willing to impart His spirit to all who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," that He may feed them the bread of life and refresh them at the inexhaustible fountain of "living waters." The coming to Christ with hungry hearts and thirsty souls is the first step so that he may give us of His spirit and fill us with His bounty. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." And again: "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:10, 14. The truth of Jesus and the spirit of His life, appropriated by a living faith, may thus become perennial sources of spiritual power and refreshment. And whether we come into the possession of Christ's life and spirit through a process of Christian culture and training, or through a sudden transformation of our spiritual natures in conversion, is matter of small moment so long as we are fully conscious of being in possession of the spirit. We need to come continually in the spirit of childlike trust and teachableness and ask Him to teach us of His wisdom and to inspire us with His zeal and to fill us with His spiritual presence, so that we may be able to show forth His love and wisdom in our lives and to reflect His divine graciousness and beauty in our characters. To live the life of faith, to do the will of Him that saved us and redeemed us,

to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves, to "follow the Master" in His mission of service and self-surrender, to minister to the lowly and needy, to carry the bread and water of life to the hungry and thirsty souls of God's children, these are some of the duties and privileges imposed upon us as children of God's spiritual kingdom; and in the faithful and loving performance of these lowly services in the spirit and for the sake of the Master, we do show forth most effectually the "fruits" of the spirit.

## V. Concluding Remarks.

The great question with us, therefore, should be, "Are we living the life of the spirit and do we shew forth the 'fruits' of the spirit" in our lives here and now. Do we really love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves in the sense that we have an overpowering regard for the interests of God's kingdom and an unselfish and a disinterested desire to do good to our fellow-men? Is it really our supreme delight to do the will of our Father which is in heaven? Is our faith in the Lord Jesus a living, personal faith which takes hold of our lives and which appropriates the mercies and sacrifices of Jesus for spiritual nourishment and refreshment? Have we surrendered our wills to God's will and our lives to His guidance and control in such a complete and unreserved way that we are ready at all times and under all circumstances to say, "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done"? Is our highest aim in life to conform to the spirit and character of Jesus Christ, who is the express image of the invisible God, so that we may grow up "into Him" in all things and "come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"? Is it the supreme and all-absorbing desire of our lives to be really "emptied of self" so that we may be "filled with all the fulness of God," to the end that our feeble lives may be instruments in the hands of God for the "furtherance of the Gospel," and the building up of His

kingdom in the hearts of His children. If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, then we may know absolutely that we are in a state of regeneration and of salvation, whatever our method of conversion or the type of our Christian experience may have been. The important question is not, "How did I become a member of God's spiritual household," or "What were my experiences during conversion," but "*Am I a member of the kingdom now?*" Not how we entered into the spiritual Zion, or by what road we approached the gates, or what were the conditions of being admitted, but the consciousness of the blessed fact of being in the spiritual Zion now and of being permitted to behold its dazzling splendor and to participate in its glorious services and to worship at the feet of Him who sits upon the throne, these are the supreme facts to be considered. Whether we have entered the heavenly Zion through the gate of feeling, or through the gate of intelligence and reason, or through the gate of a childlike trust and simplicity, is a matter of small consequence, so long as we really have entered and passed in "through the gates into the city" of the New Jerusalem, "whose Builder and Maker is God."

In conclusion, I wish to quote from Pres. King's excellent pamphlet on "Christian Training and the Revival as Methods of Converting Men." I quote rather freely, and the italics are mine. Says Prof. King: "For myself, the conception that best brings together all the types of religious experience and best enables one to do justice to all, that can include the sudden and gradual conversion and the life that seems to have lived always in the light, that can include the methods of both Christian training and the revival, that in particular can do full justice to feeling in religion, and yet indicate its plain limits, and the conception, which at the same time seems to me truest to the lines of Christ's own revelation, is *the conception of the religious life as a personal relation with the personal God*. The conditions and laws of such a life would be those of *a deepening friendship*. And this thoroughly personal conception seems to me best of all able to do justice to the deepest elements of Christian experience at the same time that it guards most delicately against all possible excesses. It

is able, I believe, to take up into itself all the justifiable elements of mysticism, and yet avoid its errors.

"And a true mysticism knows that the spirit, reverent of personality, leads to a *self-restraint that does not seek the emotional experience simply as such on any conditions*, but knowing the supreme psychological conditions of happiness and character and influence, *it loses itself in an unselfish love, and in absorbing work*, and in rational attention to the great spiritual realities, and understands that it must simply let the experiences come. *It will have nothing therefore to do with strained emotion or with the working up of feeling for its own sake.* It seeks health, not merely the signs of health. It recognizes that the supreme joy is joy in personal life, joy in entering into the revelation of a person; and it believes with reason *that a growing acquaintance with God must have such heights and depths of meaning as no other personal relation can have.* True mysticism is therefore not afraid or distrustful of true emotion—of joy or peace, of intense longing or of keen satisfaction—in the religious life. But it views with deep distrust an emotional emphasis in religion which ignores the ethical. It cannot forget that Christ thought that everything must be tested by its fruits in life."

The true Christian life is a life of faith and trust. Ray Palmer, the author of that precious hymn, "My faith looks up to Thee," has expressed the spirit of a life of simple faith and childlike trust in the following beautiful verses in "Father, Lead On."

I take pleasure in bringing this treatise on Conversion and Religious Experience to a close in the words of the poet, believing that the beautiful spirit of trustfulness embodied in this devout prayer for spiritual guidance expresses the repentant and submissive attitude of heart, out of which all true religious experience must flow.

#### FATHER, LEAD ON.

My Father God, lead on!

Calmly I follow where Thy guiding hand

Directs my steps. I would not trembling stand.

Though all before the way  
 Is dark as night, I stay  
 My soul on Thee, and say :  
 Father, I trust Thy love : lead on.

Jesus as Thou wilt : lead on !  
 For I am as a child, and know not how  
 To tread the starless path whose windings now  
     Lie hid from mortal ken.  
     Although I know not when  
     Sweet day will dawn again,  
 Father, I wait Thy will : lead on.

I ask not why : lead on !  
 Mislead, Thou canst not, though through days of **grief**  
 And nights of anguish, pangs without relief,  
     Or fears that would o'erthrow  
     My faith, Thou bidst me go.  
     Thy changeless love, I know,  
 Father, my soul will keep : lead on.

With Thee is light : lead on !  
 When dank and chill at eve the night mists fall,  
 O'erhanging all things like a dismal pall,  
     The gloom, with dawn hath fled ;  
     So, though 'mid shades I tread,  
     The dayspring o'er my head,  
 Father, from Thee shall break : lead on.

The way is peace : lead on !  
 Made heir of all things, I were yet unblest,  
 Didst Thou not dwell with me and make me rest  
     Beneath the brooding wing  
     That Thou dost o'er me fling,  
     Till Thou thyself shalt bring.  
 Father, my spirit home : lead on.



Thou givest strength : lead on !  
 I cannot sink while Thy right hand upholds,  
 Nor comfort lack while Thy kind arm enfolds.  
     Through all my soul I feel  
     A healing influence steal,  
     While at Thy feet I kneel,  
 Father, in lowly trust : lead on.

    'Twill soon be o'er : lead on !  
 Left all behind, earth's heartaches then shall seem  
 Even as memories of a vanished dream ;  
     And when of griefs and tears  
     The golden fruit appears,  
     Amid the eternal years,  
 Father, all thanks be Thine ! Lead on.









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